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ABSTRACT

This study examined the collaboration of four adult English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learners as they participated in a small groups to construct meaning in response to English short stories. The study investigated learners' oral responses and utterances and noted how group discussion influenced the content of their responses to short stories during one particular discussion session and over the semester. Data collection involved audiotaping peer group discussions. Oral responses in group discussions were collected at three different intervals during one semester. Students read and discussed three different short stories at each interval, also giving presentations to the rest of the class. Students evaluated their own and each others' work. Overall, participants discussed a broad range of topics in the collaborative group. Their utterances during the discussions were highly fluid, constantly shifting, and dynamic. They used various strategies to communicate their ideas and opinions and to construct meanings of English short stories. Collaborative discussion of short stories enabled these ESL students to sharpen and extend their comprehension and oral skills. Two appendixes present synopses of short stories and questions used to evaluate group presentations. (Contains approximately 150 references.) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education) (SM)

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THE RESPONSES OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS TO SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH IN COLLABORATIVE SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

LEWIS LEVINE, PhD

BA, Harvard College, 1974
MA, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976

Mentor
Rita S. Brause, EdD

Readers
Anthony N. Baratta, EdD
Clement G. B. London, EdD

FL801534

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DEDICATION

To my son, Gabriel Bernard Levine, whose youthful exuberance, unbridled passions, and immense love of life and learning are a constant source of delight and inspiration.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Recent research and theory in response to literature have emphasized the critical interaction that the individual reader, the text, and the social context play in the construction of meaning of a literary text (Bleich, 1975; Culler, 1975; Fish, 1980; Holland, 1975; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1994). The phrase "response to literature" implies the full complexity of the reading process and includes not only the evocation and evaluation of the work during the actual act of reading but also the expressed response which follows the reading of a text (Cooper, 1985). While there is a considerable body of research devoted to the responses of individual readers to different types of literary texts (Beach, 1973; Earthman, 1992; Holland, 1975; Langer, 1990; Squire, 1964), the process through which different readers reach a consensus about the meanings of a particular text has received little attention.

Small-group discussion about literary texts has been cited as a useful way for students to deepen their understanding of text (Langer, 1993; Petrosky, 1985; Pradl, 1996; Smagorinsky, 1991, 1992) and to broaden

their own range of potential interpretation (Bleich, 1980). The potential benefits attributed to small-group discussion of literary texts are consistent with claims made for collaborative learning groups in general; that is, such groups provide a valuable forum for the testing out of ideas and hypotheses and the acquisition of new concepts and knowledge (Barnes & Todd, 1977; Bruffee 1982, 1986). In addition, work in collaborative groups is said to afford greater responsibility for decision making to the learner and empower the learner to make new knowledge his or her own (Leal, 1993; Short & Pierce, 1990). In the area of second-language acquisition, much attention has recently been given to the importance of meaningful language use and interpersonal communication in the learning process. Theorists and educators (Carrasquillo, 1993; Krashen, 1982; Long & Porter, 1985; B. P. Taylor, 1983; Wells, 1981; Widdowson, 1978) see the classroom as a place where the second-language learner is actively engaged in meaningful ideas important to the learner. Raimes (1983) refers to this paradigm of second-language acquisition as one which emphasizes real language use, as opposed to correct usage; advocates a student-centered classroom; promotes language use, as opposed to direct instruction in language; develops humanistic, interpersonal approaches; and considers the nature of the learner, the learning process, and the

learning environment.

Second-language theorists and practitioners of teaching English to speakers of other languages (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Carrasquillo, 1993; Ellison & Justicia, 1989; Gajdusek, 1988; Levine, 1989; Long, 1986; McKay, 1982; Oster, 1989; Povey, 1986) have recommended that literature be used as an integral part of the ESL curriculum. Literature is seen as a natural way to promote meaning-centered interaction among peers in the classroom, to promote humanistic values, and to facilitate the development of techniques and strategies for constructing meaning and knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of this investigation is to study the collaboration of four adult English-as-a-second-language learners in a small group in the construction of meaning in response to short stories written in English. As is consistent with hypothesis-generating studies, these initial questions were reformulated in the process of data collection and analysis.

Research Questions

1. What is the focus of oral response of adult ESL learners to short stories in English in collaborative small-group discussions?

2. What is the nature of the utterances of adult ESL learners who discuss their responses to short stories in English in collaborative small-group contexts?

3. How does collaborative group discussion influence the content of individual group member's responses to short stories written in English at the following times:

   a. during a particular discussion session?

   b. over a one-semester period?

4. What factors facilitate the oral responses to short stories written in English of adult ESL students working in small groups?

Theoretical Rationale

This section includes a discussion of the following: theory of response to literature; second-language acquisition theory; the social nature of language, learning, and knowledge; and collaborative learning.

Theory of Response to Literature

Literary theorists have recognized the complex matrix involved in the study of reader's response to literature. Attention must be paid to the intricate relationship of the individual reader, the text, and the social context in which the reading act occurs (Holland, 1975; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1985, 1994). While reader-response theory stresses the value of literature as a way of knowing oneself and understanding others, it also

attaches importance to the consciousness and role of the individual reader. In a school context, it shifts emphasis away from the authority of so-called critical experts and received knowledge, and places greater importance on the elaboration and evaluation of individual responses of readers in a classroom community (Cooper, 1985).

Most classroom research has centered on the responses of individuals to the reading of a text. Chabot (1985) and Webb (1985) suggest that future research in reader-response focus less on individual responses and more on commonalities of response within communities of readers. Chabot argues that more attention be given to the "interpretive situation," the process through which different readers reach a consensus about the meaning of a particular text, and that any useful model of response should involve looking at readers and texts within the context of a community of readers.

Chabot (1985) also stresses the importance of studying what he terms "moments of apparent interpretive impasse" (p. 27). He posits that total understanding of text is always at stake at these moments, and that only knowledge about the reading process can assist the reader at such times. Petrosky (1985) claims that when readers are allowed to share their responses with each other, the

responses "become more than the sum of their parts" (p. 71). Bleich (1980) believes that shared response helps readers to expand and develop their range of response for future reading. As he states: "The knowledge of how other real readers thought about their readings is a reliable means of widening one's own vocabulary of potential interpretation" (pp. 260-261).

Second-Language Acquisition Theory

Second-language acquisition theory has been greatly influenced by the work of Krashen (1982). He theorizes that all language acquisition, both first and second, takes place only when there is comprehension of real messages. Language acquisition, he claims, does not require extensive learning of grammatical rules; the best method for helping students acquire a language is to supply "comprehensible input" in low-anxiety situations, using messages that students really want to hear.

According to Krashen's theory, we acquire language only when we need to understand language that contains structure a little beyond our current level. We utilize context and our knowledge of the world to help us understand language. Krashen views language acquisition as a subconscious process during which the language acquirers are generally not aware that they are acquiring language; they are only conscious of using language for the purpose of communication.

While other second-language theorists take issue with various aspects of Krashen's model (Bialystok, 1978, 1990; McLaughlin, 1990), the theory has resulted in a new thrust in second-language pedagogy, that of developing communicative competence by using content-based language in meaningful communicative contexts, an approach referred to as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). While CLT classroom practice takes diverse forms, the processes involved in using language, that is, the strategies for understanding and for negotiating meaning are the focus of attention (Nattinger, 1984; Sauvignon, 1991).

The Social Nature of Language, Learning, and Knowledge

The importance of studying language acquisition in its social context has its roots in the social nature of all language and learning. Vygotsky (1962) regards language as the means by which human beings reflect on and elaborate their experience; such a process is both personal and profoundly social. Language shapes human activity by the way it affects our interaction with others. According to Vygotsky, the relationship between the individual and society is in a constant dialectical process that serves to combine and separate the various aspects of human life.

While few would dispute the notion that human language is developed out of a need to communicate with

others, the view that learning and knowledge are also socially mediated and constructed is perhaps a more controversial position to take. Kuhn (1970) has theorized that scientific knowledge is generated, established, and maintained by communities of knowledgeable peers. Scientific knowledge is not an absolute and objective entity that exists apart from or external to human beings; rather it is what we (knowledgeable peers) agree it to be, at least at a particular point in time. Knowledge then is not so much a mental construct as a social artifact.

Rorty (1979) has extended Kuhn's theory about scientific knowledge to include all other academic disciplines. According to Rorty, "we understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief" (p. 170). Knowledge achieves its air of authority from the process of socially justifying belief; this occurs through the "normal discourse" of communities of knowledgeable peers.

Geertz (1973) writes of human thought as "consummately social--social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its forms, social in its applications" (p. 360). Geertz (1983) believes that what we ordinarily tend to think of as private, personal, and internal matters we must reconceive as social entities. He states: "It is a matter of conceiving of cognition,

emotion, motivation, perception, imagination, memory ... whatever, as themselves, and directly, social affairs" (pp. 76-77).

In the field of literature and literary criticism, knowledgeable peers (critics, scholars, academics) decide what is to be taught, read, studied, and written about. They give weight, value, and attention to literary interpretations, judgments, and criticism; all of these take place in a public and social context. What constitutes an authoritative interpretation of a text rests in large part on the reception it gets among knowledgeable peers, what Fish (1980) refers to as "authoritative communities." McGann (1983) suggests that even the creation of any literary text is an inherently social construct since it usually involves the mediation of the writer's friends, editor, publisher, and sense of audience.

What is essential for participation in any community of knowledgeable peers is that the participant be able to engage competently in the appropriate and specialized discourse of that community. Eagleton (1983) writes:

> Literary theorists, critics, and teachers, then, are not so much purveyors of doctrine as custodians of a discourse. Their task is to preserve this discourse, extend and elaborate it as necessary, defend it from other forms of discourse, initiate newcomers into it and determine whether or not they have successfully mastered it .... Certain pieces of writing are selected as being more amenable to this discourse than others, and these are what is known as literature or the `literary canon.' (p. 201)

This perspective raises fundamental questions about the role of language and learning in the classroom and the function of education in general. If learning and knowing are not merely the assimilation of new information but involve instead the ability to engage in the discourse of a particular field in order to generate, establish, and maintain knowledge within a community of knowledgeable peers, then greater understanding of this collaborative process is needed. Bruffee (1984) suggests that this process occurs in this way:

> by challenging each other's biases and presuppositions; by negotiating collectively toward new paradigms of perception, thought, feeling, and expression; and by joining larger, more experienced communities of knowledgeable peers through assenting to those communities' interests, values, language, and paradigms of perception and thought. (p. 646)

These are hypotheses in need of further investigation. If one accepts the theory that knowledge is the product of human beings in a state of continual negotiation or conversation, then it is appropriate to conjecture that students will profit from collaborative tasks that require them to interact among themselves in order to negotiate meaning, to generate and test hypotheses, to reach a consensus of understanding and, by so doing, to experience first-hand how knowledge is created and evolves.

Although collaborative learning contexts have been studied by a number of researchers, there has been little

research on the effects of collaborative learning in college or university settings (Bruffee, 1986). Despite research surveys (Johnson, 1981; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1983) that support the view that students learn better through noncompetitive collaboration than in more traditionally structured classrooms where learning is seen as more competitive and individualized, group work and collaborative tasks are rarely encouraged (Forman & Cazden, 1985; Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980).

Perret-Clermont (1980) interprets the available research to mean that peer interaction enhances the development of logical reasoning through resolution of cognitive conflicts, since such conflicts are most likely to occur, she asserts, in situations where children with different perspectives are asked to arrive at consensus. Inagaki (1981) and Inagaki and Hatano (1977) have drawn similar conclusions concerning the role of peer interaction. Forman and Cazden (1985) claim that peer collaboration helps establish several conditions: the need to respond to questions and challenges; the need to provide verbal instructions to peers, and the impetus to be self-reflective. Moreover, peer-led literature discussions have been found to allow students to collaborate equitably in forming interpretations of texts (Leal, 1993; Short & Pierce, 1990).

Glasser (1986) sees small-group learning as having

the greatest potential for fulfilling the basic needs of human beings. Glasser classifies five basic human needs as physiological, the need to stay alive and reproduce, and psychological, the need for belonging, power, freedom, and fun. All of these needs, he theorizes, are built into our basic genetic structure. Glasser attributes the popularity and success of many nonacademic activities, e.g., team sports, student government, the performance arts, all intrinsically group efforts, to their basic need-fulfilling structure. Classroom learning teams, he claims, offer the greatest potential for satisfying students' needs in a classroom setting.

In terms of second-language acquisition, Long and Porter (1985) cite five pedagogical reasons for the use of group work in the classroom: It increases the opportunity to practice the target language; it helps individualize instruction; it improves the quality of student talk; it is conducive to a positive learning atmosphere; it helps motivate learners. They report that research findings on interlanguage talk in the classroom generally support positive claims made for small-group work in the second-language classroom. Although small-group work is held to be a useful instructional practice in the ESL classroom, it has yet to be investigated in ESL students' responses to literature.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the collection of data from a group of four adult ESL students enrolled in the same ESL class at an urban community college. The data were limited to oral responses in group discussions at three different intervals during a one-semester (three-and-a-half month) period. Three different short stories were read and discussed at each interval. A total of nine stories was discussed by the participants. Each short story was assigned to be read outside of class and discussed in groups during a regularly scheduled class period of approximately 80 minutes in length.

All the students involved in the study are native speakers of Spanish.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORY AND RESEARCH

This chapter presents a review of theory and pertinent research in the areas of response to literature, reading, second-language acquisition, and collaborative learning presumed to be relevant to the research questions. This body of theory and research guided the development of the research questions and the design of the study. The section on response to literature includes theories of reader response, followed by a discussion of studies of literary response, with particular attention given to studies involving peer group response to literature. The section on reading theory also discusses related issues of second-language reading and studies of second-language readers. The section on second-language acquisition highlights influential theories of second-language acquisition as well as studies of peer-group work in the second-language classroom. The concluding section of this chapter addresses issues of collaborative learning.

Theory of Reader Response

This study is concerned with the nature of adult second-language learners' individual and collaborative

responses to short stories written in English and the factors that influence their responses. A discussion of reader-response theory is necessary in order to understand some of the key issues involved in studying responses to literature.

Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory of the literary work views the literary experience as the evocation of a "poem" (p. 12) by the reader in a transaction between reader and text. Rosenblatt defines evocation as the "lived through process of building up the work under the guidance of the text" (p. 69). Rosenblatt's theory of reading as a transaction highlights the essential role that the reader, the text, and the social and cultural context all play in the meaning-making process. For Rosenblatt (1985), "context takes on scope and importance from the transactional view of the reading event as a unique coming-together of a particular personality and a particular text at a particular time and place under particular circumstances" (p. 104).

Rosenblatt (1994) draws a clear distinction between two basic types of reading: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading, from the Latin verb effere, to carry away, implies a utilitarian function or purpose for reading, a desire to come away with a particular set of facts, ideas, or concepts. In aesthetic reading, by

contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens in the reading process. Rosenblatt claims that "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (p. 25). While most reading falls somewhere near the middle of the efferent-aesthetic continuum, any reading event can be described as being primarily efferent or aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1985).

Iser's (1978) phenomenological theory of literature, like Rosenblatt's transactional theory, emphasizes the creative role the reader plays in making meanings of text. Iser's theory tends to give greater emphasis to the role of the text itself. For Iser, the text guides the reader's search for the intention behind the author's choice of discourse conventions. The "communicatory function" of literary texts ensures "that the reaction of text to world will trigger a matching response in the reader" (p. 99).

From Iser's (1978) perspective, a literary work can only be actualized through a convergence of reader and text. The reader is seen as a cocreator of the work. The reader creates the work by providing that part of the text which is not directly stated but implied. Meaning is not some object waiting to be defined but rather an effect to be experienced. Iser sees the reader's role as filling in the missing "gaps" of the text in his or her

own unique way. For Iser, the text contains "intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning-production, but the meaning produced may then lead to a whole variety of different experiences and hence subjective judgments" (p. 25).

Iser (1978) suggests that the reader's task is to explore the potential meanings of a text and not be restricted to one meaning or interpretation. Iser recognizes, however, that the total potential meanings of a text can never be realized by the reader. Iser (1972) argues that this, the reader's inability to fulfill all the potential meanings of a text, is unavoidable, since "each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities" (p. 285).

Holland (1973, 1975) envisions a reader's responses to literature as being determined by the reader's individual identity and self-awareness. Holland (1975) sees the ways in which individuals deal with real-life situations as similar to the ways in which individual readers approach literary texts. Upon studying the responses of five college-age students, Holland concluded that each of them had his own characteristic style of reading, or identity theme, which in turn influenced the way he responded to a text. Holland claims that readers frequently project onto a text

their own idiosyncratic fantasies or filter a text through their individual patterns of defense. Holland conceives of all interpretation as a function or consequence of individual identity. For him, the reader fuses his own identity with that of the author by recreating the author's identity theme according to the reader's own characteristic pattern of response.

Holland (1973) suggests that two readers are able to agree on the meaning of a text because they have similar identity themes. Readers with different identity themes are able to reach a consensus of interpretation because they are able to integrate each other's interpretations into their own re-creations. Holland states that readers:

> distinguish different readings of a text or personality "objectively" by how much and how directly they seem to bring the details of a text or a self into a convergence around a centering theme. We also compare them as to whether they "feel right" or "make sense." That is, do we feel we could use them to organize and make coherent our own experience of that text or person? (pp. 125-26)

Holland (1975) emphasizes the group's influence or consensus on a reader's response. "Each reader takes in statements about a literary work as he takes in the work itself" (p. 213). Consensus of opinion, Holland argues, is often developed or established because individual readers are usually interested in sharing their interpretations with other readers and gaining support for their "idiosyncratic construct" (p. 220).

Bleich's (1975) theory of subjective criticism places far greater emphasis on the creative role of the reader than other reader-response theorists. For Bleich, a text's meaning rests solely on the process of symbolization that occurs in the reader's mind. Bleich refers to the reader's initial symbolization as a "response." The attempt to comprehend the response involves a process of resymbolization, which emanates from the reader's "need, desire or demand for explanation" (p. 39). For Bleich, it is this need to explain one's resymbolization that lies at the heart of individual interpretation. The reader's response and interpretation are not restricted by the text, as they are in the response theories of Holland (1975), Iser (1978) and Rosenblatt (1994).

An important component of Bleich's (1975) theory involves the concept of negotiation. Individual interpretations of readers may be negotiated within communities, and as a result of this process new knowledge may be generated and established. Bleich argues that "the synthesizing of communal knowledge cannot begin without the substrate of individual knowledge" (p. 151). Bleich sees the process of negotiating meaning as an overt, conscious process that occurs within a context where agreement may or may not be achieved.

Bleich (1975) defines knowledge as the product of negotiation among members of an interpretive community. This definition of knowledge has led him to propose changes in the way institutional authority is perceived and educational structures are organized. Bleich (1975, 1980) advocates a revamping of the way most classrooms are organized in order to remove the formal authority of teachers' and critics' interpretations and place it with those who negotiate the meaning of texts through shared response. The freedom to explore texts from a subjective perspective, to submit individual interpretations to those of other readers, and to negotiate meaning within a community of learners leads to new knowledge of language, literature, and self.

Culler's (1975) structuralist theory of response de-emphasizes individual identity and consciousness and gives far greater weight to the role that institutions play in shaping the way we perceive and value literary texts. In contrast to the psychological and subjective models of reading put forth by Bleich (1975) and Holland (1975), Culler embraces a far more social orientation. Culler's basic assumption is that the meaning a text acquires for a reader is determined not so much by the text or the reader's creative role, as Iser (1978) or Rosenblatt (1994) would argue, but by the complex sign systems readers conventionally apply when reading

literature. For Culler (1980), the principal issue "is not what actual readers happen to do but what an ideal reader must know implicitly in order to read and interpret works in ways which we consider acceptable" (p. 111). The concept of an ideal reader is a theoretical construct that Culler claims should be seen as a representation of the basic notion of acceptability.

Culler (1980) bases his understanding of how we make meaning of texts on a linguistic model. Our ability to understand human speech implies having an internalized grammar that permits us to understand. Likewise, Culler argues, our ability to understand literature or to demonstrate what he calls "literary competence" implies having an internalized grammar of literature, knowing the conventions of literature that direct us to select certain features of the text, which in turn may correspond to public notions about what constitutes an acceptable or appropriate interpretation. Culler's focus, then, is on the internalized system of rules and conventions that make literary texts accessible or meaningful to readers. Thus, the underlying principle of interpretation rests not with the reader but with the institutions that teach readers to read and give weight and value to particular kinds of interpretive readings.

Fish (1980), like Culler (1975, 1980), emphasizes a social perspective in his model of reading. Fish calls

attention to the role of the interpretive community and the importance of social sources within a broader cultural setting. Fish sees the understanding of language as being, by its very nature, a social activity. Reaching an understanding of a text is not an isolated, personal process but rather a socially mediated process that is a consequence of shared language and shared experience.

Fish (1980) characterizes interpretive communities as being composed of "those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (p. 171). Fish's concept of interpretive strategies resembles Culler's (1975) notion of literary conventions. For both theorists, it is knowledge of these strategies or conventions that makes authoritative interpretation possible.

Fish (1980), like Holland (1973), argues that perception is a constructive act; we interpret as we perceive. Our perceptions are essentially interpretations. Where Fish differs from the psychological orientation of theorists like Bleich (1975) and Holland is in his contention that an individual's perceptions and beliefs are a function of the assumptions and values shared by the group or community to which the individual belongs. According to Fish, this accounts

"both for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same group) and for the regularity with which a single reader will employ different interpretive strategies and thus make different texts (he belongs to different communities)" (p. 171).

Tompkins (1980) summarizes the reorientation that reader-response theory provides when she states:

> The goal of literary criticism becomes the faithful description of the activity of reading, an activity that is minute, complicated, strenuous, and never the same from one reading to the next. This re-definition of what literature is, i.e., not an object but an experience, obliterates the traditional separation between reader and text and makes the responses of the reader rather than the contents of the work the focus of critical attention. (pp. xvii)

The use of literature in the classroom has been cited by educators to have a variety of purposes and functions. Protherough (1983) classifies these functions according to three broad categories: personal, curricular, and literary. Personal functions of using literature are: to promote enjoyment, pleasure, and positive attitudes toward reading; to develop the imagination; to foster greater self-understanding; to extend experience and knowledge of life. Curricular functions include the use of literature to develop students' own use of language; to promote other classroom activities, such as discussion and creative writing; to increase understanding of other academic subjects; and to explore moral and ethical values. Literary functions

include developing awareness of concepts, forms, and structures used in literary texts, and improving students' ability to discriminate, evaluate, generalize, and think critically. By promoting the so-called literary functions of literature, students become better able to understand and appreciate progressively more demanding texts.

Hannsen (1986) and Miall (1986), while citing the pedagogical implications of reader-response theory, advocate a reorganization of the traditional classroom to provide contexts that are supportive of personal, interactive involvement with text. Miall argues that an authoritative reading is one in which "students' own constructs are in command of a text, and at the same time related to the constructs shared by the community of readers" (p. 194). For Miall, effective learning occurs "when the authority of both text and teacher is set aside" (p. 187).

Fillion (1981) cites the conclusions of Flower and Hayes (1980) about the composing processes of good and poor writers as providing a theoretical basis for encouraging shared literary response in the classroom. Flower and Hayes see good writers as solving a different problem than poor writers do. They claim that people are only able to solve those problems which they are able to represent to themselves. Fillion underscores the

importance of encouraging students to generate their own questions of texts, of allowing students to represent to themselves and others the problematic aspects of a text. Fillion suggests that this can best be done by providing students with an opportunity to explore questions in nonthreatening contexts, such as small discussion groups.

Theorists cite other potential benefits of shared response to literature. Petrosky (1985) claims that when students are permitted to share their responses to texts, this can lead to deeper understanding and fuller interpretation. Bleich (1980) believes that shared response exposes readers to different interpretive styles and approaches which can extend the kinds of strategies and approaches students employ in their future reading. Prior to the last decade, the majority of studies have dealt with response to literature as a static entity that occurs in a fixed and measurable way only after a text has been read (Applebee, 1977). Several studies have suggested that shared response is an important component of the response process.

Petrosky (1975) examined the developmental characteristics of adolescents' group responses and found that students who participated in group discussion sessions were able to clarify and validate their responses. The results of the study also suggest that cognitive development influences response to a great

degree. Response to literature solely on the basis of personal experience implies a reliance on concrete operational thought processes. Abstract reasoning, the ability to construct hypotheses, to generate, and consider alternatives while responding to a text, are processes characteristic of formal operational thought.

Britton (1970) has hypothesized that the reader of a literary text needs to withhold judgment until the entire text has been read. Britton claims that the reader should evaluate the text based on the complete aesthetic world the author has created. Britton refers to this phenomenon as the reader's ability to assume a "spectator" stance. Galda (1982) also claims that this ability is necessary for mature literary judgment. Galda found that only one of the three fifth-grade students who participated in researcher-led group discussions was able to maintain a "spectator" stance in her response to stories.

Holland (1975) and Mills (1976) found that peer discussion helps filter out inappropriate responses and leads to elaboration and development of initial responses. Beach (1973) investigated college students' responses to poetry made in the form of taped or written free associations as students read the poems.

Beach (1973) also studied patterns of response during small-group peer discussions. Beach found that

both individual free associations and group discussions frequently began with digressions as readers attempted to establish facts about the poem. Beach concluded that digression responses are an important part of the response process. Beach also concluded that discussion groups whose members have established a background understanding of a text through previously completed assignments are more likely to make interpretive statements about a work than groups whose members have had no such preparation. Beach found that responses made in group discussion did not always lead to the breaking of new ground. Those students who had engaged in free-association assignments often repeated their ideas in the more public discussion forum.

Purves (1981) has found that patterns of students' response to literature are frequently learned. Purves claims that the teacher's role is a critical factor in shaping how students perceive the role of literature and how they respond to it.

Marshall (1987) examined the effects of restricted, personal analytic and formal analytic writing assignments on the nature of students' written responses and composing processes. Marshall concluded that when students frame an argument in writing, locate supporting evidence, and choose the language to convey that argument, they may be constructing both a written product

and a mental representation of the story, a representation that may serve as the basis for what is subsequently remembered and understood about a story.

An examination of previous research on response to literature leads to several general conclusions. Research suggests that responses to literature are individualistic in nature and frequently exhibit a consistent pattern across different kinds of texts and contexts. Prior reading experience, personality, age, cognitive development, and shared response are all factors which appear to influence individual response.

While previous studies of response to literature have involved participants of different age groups, such as children (Applebee, 1978; Galda, 1982; Hickman, 1981; Nissel, 1987) and adolescents or young adults (Beach, 1973; Holland, 1975; Petrosky, 1975; Squire, 1964; Wilson, 1966), all utilized native speakers of English. This study seeks to investigate the responses of adult second-language students of English.

Theory of Reading

The process by which readers construct meaning of the printed symbols on a page involves a variety of factors. Reading theorists view the reader's prior knowledge and experience, expectations, and purposes for reading as having a critical role in the way a reader makes meaning of a given text (Gibson & Levin, 1975;

Goodman, 1968; Smith, 1982).

Smith (1982) refers to reading comprehension as the identification of meaning. In his view, the search for meaning not only facilitates the reader's ability to identify words with relatively less visual information but it allows printed words to be understood without having to be identified precisely. Both aspects of meaning identification are, as Smith puts it, "reflections of the same underlying processes--the use of minimal visual information to make decisions specific to implicit questions (or predictions) about meaning on the part of the reader" (p. 155).

Smith (1982) views our ability to anticipate and predict as the basis for our understanding of the world. Prediction allows the mind to eliminate alternatives in advance so that it is not overwhelmed by possibilities and choices. "Prediction is the prior elimination of unlikely alternatives... Prediction means asking questions, and comprehension means getting these questions answered" (p. 62). Smith argues that differences in comprehension among individual readers of a particular text may be attributed to the different kinds of questions readers ask. This is applicable to the reading and understanding of literary texts. As Smith asserts: "A large part of comprehending literature in any conventional manner is knowing the conventional

questions to ask and how to find their answers" (p.17).

Goodman (1982) employs the phrase "psycholinguistic guessing game" as a metaphor for the reading process. For Goodman, reading is a selective process that involves:

> partial use of available minimal language areas selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectations. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected, refined as reading progresses (p. 33).

Goodman argues that skill in reading involves "not greater precision but more accurate first guesses based on better sampling techniques, greater control over language structures, broadened experiences and increased conceptual development" (p. 39).

Cognitive psychologists have found that when linguistic aptitude is held constant, the reader's schemata, that is, the reader's knowledge of the world and the ability to retrieve that knowledge, may be the most important variable in determining the quality of comprehension (Anderson, 1977; Langer, 1982). Wittrock (1983) sees good reading, like effective writing, as involving generative cognitive processes that create meaning by building relations between the text and what we know, believe, and experience. While the construction of meaning is at the heart of the reading act, the process also involves a reader's restructuring the text in familiar terms, connecting his or her knowledge and

experience to the author's perspective, and, in the process, making new information his or her own. Wittrock argues that when readers construct relations between their knowledge, experience, and the text itself, comprehension and retention are increased.

Using think-aloud protocols, Langer (1990) examined the meaning-making processes of individual readers (seventh-grade and eleventh-grade students) with different types of texts (short stories, a science selection and a social studies selection). Langer identified four recursive stances readers assume with a text. They are: being out of and stepping into envisionment, being in and moving through an envisionment, stepping back and rethinking what one knows, and stepping out and objectifying the experience. Langer also found an important difference in the approach readers take with literary and informational texts. With literary texts, readers tended more toward exploring a broad range of interpretive possibilities while readers of informational texts tended more toward using the content to home in on increasingly more specific meaning. In general, the stances readers assumed were influenced in large part by their initial decision to treat the texts as literary or informational; readers also treated literature as experience and not as information.

Earthman (1992) looked at the ways in which less

experienced readers (college freshmen) and more highly trained readers (graduate students in literature) respond to stories and poems. Earthman found that more experienced readers were able to view a text from more than one perspective simultaneously, which led to deeper understandings of a work and the work's implications. Moreover, more experienced readers were much more willing and able to refine or revise their perspectives and interpretations over time. Less experienced readers, by contrast, expressed confusion or lack of understanding but did not take the necessary steps to eliminate their confusion; rather, they glossed over elements that more experienced readers found highly relevant, particularly those involving symbolism or imagery, which the more experienced readers then utilized to derive greater insight and understanding of a text.

Second-Language Reading Theory

The body of theory and research that has been put forward in reading and cognitive psychology has had considerable influence on second-language reading theory and pedagogy. Second-language theorists and educators recognize the critical role that schemata play in any reader's attempt to understand what is read in a second language, and argue that the background knowledge a reader brings to the text is frequently culture specific. Hudson (1982) and Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) found

that second-language readers consistently attempt to use and apply specific schemata to make meaning of text, and that many problems of second-language readers are due to their inability to access the appropriate schema needed to understand a text. Carrell and Eisterhold claim that second-language readers often lack the appropriate schemata in order to construct meaning of texts.

Carrell (1987) found that familiarity with both content and rhetorical form are important factors in a reader's ability to understand a text written in a second language. When both rhetorical form and content are unfamiliar, second-language readers find a text to be relatively difficult. However, when either form or content is unfamiliar, unfamiliar content appears to pose more difficulty for the reader as opposed to unfamiliar form.

Most studies in the area of second-language reading have been limited to identifying the relationship between first- and second-language reading ability. Research indicates that there is a high positive correlation between a reader's ability to read in a first and second language (Benedetto, 1984; Cziko, 1976; Lapkin & Swain, 1977; Tucker, 1975). There is also evidence to suggest that as linguistic proficiency increases in a second language, linguistic signs can be utilized more readily by the reader to make predictions of text, and that

higher-level strategies developed in a first language are then transferable for use in a second language (Benedetto, 1984; Cummins, 1980; Hudson, 1982).

Block (1986) investigated the comprehension strategies of six second-language readers (three native speakers of Chinese and three native speakers of Spanish) and three native English speakers, all of whom were designated as non-proficient readers. Using think-aloud protocols to describe the comprehension strategies of students as they read expository articles, Block identified two principal types of strategies: general and local. General strategies include comprehension-getting and comprehension-monitoring strategies, while local strategies involve readers' efforts to comprehend specific and discrete linguistic units.

Block (1986) concluded that ESL readers did not seem to employ strategies or patterns of strategies any differently than the native speakers did. Block also distinguished between two types of readers; what she termed "integrators" and "non-integrators." The former were able to integrate varied information in the text, were frequently conscious of text structure, and consistently and effectively monitored their understanding as they read. "Integrators" were also more likely to focus on the thesis and main ideas of an article.

Block (1986) found "non-integrators" appeared to depend much more on personal experience as a way of constructing a representation of the text. "Non-integrators" also tended to focus more on details rather than main ideas when they restated the ideas of an article. Block also claimed a connection between strategy use and academic achievement. "Integrators" performed better in their classes and seemed to have made more progress in developing their reading skills than had "non-integrators."

In citing recent research and theory in second-language reading, Grabe (1991) has offered a set of guidelines for instruction in reading as a second language. These guidelines include the following: First, reading instruction should be done within the context of a content-centered, integrated skills curriculum. Second, sustained silent reading should be promoted to develop fluency, confidence, and interest in reading. Third, lessons should include ongoing attention to the development of background knowledge needed to understand a text. Fourth, the specific skills and strategies to be emphasized should depend on students' needs, the teaching objectives, and the overall educational content. Fifth, group work and cooperative learning should be employed regularly to promote discussion of the readings. Finally, extensive reading must also be encouraged.

Theory of Second-Language Acquisition

The work of Krashen (1982) has had a strong influence on second-language acquisition theory. Krashen's model makes a fundamental distinction between language acquisition and language learning by describing them as separate phenomena. Language acquisition is not a conscious process and is predicated on the basic human need to communicate. Language learning, by contrast, is seen as a conscious attempt to learn the rules of a language and results in metalinguistic awareness, knowing how language is rule governed and being able to talk about it.

According to Krashen (1982), acquired and learned forms of language are generated separately during speech production. Monitoring of one's linguistic performance will frequently affect one's linguistic output. Excessive attention to linguistic performance or excessive use of one's language monitor can result in halting or deficient speech production. Krashen's model also places great importance on affective variables, what he calls an "affective filter," which can impede both language acquisition and learning.

Another important component of Krashen's (1982) theory involves the concept of "comprehensible input." According to Krashen, we acquire language only when we understand language which is structured just beyond our

current level. A language user acquires the ability to employ new linguistic structures through meaning-centered interactions and participation in communicative contexts. Krashen argues that the best way to help someone acquire a second language is to provide "comprehensible input" in low-anxiety situations, using messages that students genuinely want to hear.

According to Nagle and Sanders (1986), most criticism directed at Krashen's (1982) work concerns his rigid distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Nagle and Sanders allege that Krashen's argument that learned-language forms can never be transferred to acquired forms is difficult if not impossible to corroborate, and that Krashen and his proponents have done little to substantiate this claim.

Bialystok (1978, 1990) proposes a theoretical model of second-language learning that attaches greater significance to nonlinguistic knowledge. Bialystok's model incorporates terms such as "explicit" and "implicit" instead of learned and acquired. Her model suggests that transference may occur between the two types of knowledge. Implicit linguistic knowledge, through use of inferencing strategies, may become explicit linguistic knowledge. Likewise, explicit linguistic knowledge, through formal practice, may ultimately become implicit linguistic knowledge as well.

Schmidt (1990) has claimed that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that second-language learning occurs without consciousness or awareness. In most cases, Schmidt states, understanding and learning are closely connected, and that most of the time when we want to learn something we make ourselves conscious of it, and the more there is to learn, the greater the need for conscious involvement and effort. Schmidt also believes that the only input in the target language that actually becomes intake for language learning is what learners consciously notice. For these reasons, McLaughlin (1990) has argued for abandoning Krashen's (1982) distinction between "conscious" and "unconscious" learning, citing the view that most research in this area involves self-reported strategies that rely almost extensively on retrospection, an unreliable methodology, according to McLaughlin.

Current second-language theory is consistent with many of the principles that have emerged from theory and research in first-language development. Several multidimensional qualitative studies suggest that children's first-language development is a highly interactive process which depends not only on specific, and perhaps innate, cognitive and linguistic mechanisms, but also on the child's active participation in a linguistic environment attuned to the child's

communicative needs (Bruner, 1983; Snow, 1977; Wells, 1981).

The conceptualization of the second-language acquisition process as meaningful communication that needs to take place in an interactive context has had a profound effect on second-language classroom pedagogy (Raimes, 1983; B. P. Taylor, 1983; Widdowson, 1978). This reorientation in classroom instruction is often referred to as communicative language teaching (Nattinger, 1984; Sauvignon, 1991). The communicative approach to instruction may be characterized in the following ways: (a) Communicative competence is the goal at all levels of instruction; (b) Interaction among language users is the primary aim of instructional activity; (c) The processes involved in using language, that is, the strategies for constructing or negotiating meaning are the main focus of attention.

Hatch (1983) and Long (1983, 1985) have proposed that second-language learners and their interlocutors negotiate the meaning of messages by modifying and restructuring their interaction in order to achieve mutual understanding. As a consequence of negotiated interaction, second-language learners come to understand vocabulary and structures beyond their current level and, with repeated exposure, eventually incorporate them in future linguistic production. This perspective is

consistent with Krashen's (1982) claim that input must be understood by the learner for it to be of value in the language-acquisition process.

Research suggests that interactional variables such as turn-taking, communicative negotiation (comprehension checks, clarification requests, repetition), and feedback may be causally related to second-language development (Allwright, 1980; Gaies, 1983; Long, 1983; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Porter, 1986).

Doughty and Pica (1986) found that tasks that require exchange of information are essential to the generation of conversation and negotiation in a classroom setting. Group and dyad patterns resulted in greater modification than teacher-led contexts, suggesting that participation patterns as well as task type have an effect on the conversational modification of interaction. Doughty and Pica concluded that group work that requires extensive exchange of information to accomplish a task offers students ample opportunities to produce the target language and to modify interaction.

Studies by Porter (1983) and Gass and Varonis (1985) have found that the presence or absence of native speakers, individuals' linguistic proficiency, and first-language background all influence the amount of modification of interaction in small-group contexts. The most modification occurred in the following contexts: (a)

when all members of the group were nonnative speakers of English; (b) when there were varying degrees of proficiency among group members; (c) when group members were native speakers of different languages.

Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) claim that prior modification of input by the instructor in the form of simplified reading texts and audio recordings is of limited benefit. The researchers assert that the posing of questions is an important part of classroom interaction, since questions serve to clarify and confirm input, thus making it comprehensible. They speculate that instructional contexts which require students to take greater responsibility for their own learning are more likely to facilitate interaction, which may then serve to increase the amount of input as well as the likelihood that it will be understood.

Ernst (1994) has looked at one type of ESL classroom activity, the "talking circle," designed to provide students with more opportunity for student-generated talk and meaningful use of the target language. Ernst found that the teacher's role was pivotal in the type of talk that emerged in a group. When the teacher initiated the talk, students tended to respond with brief utterances, often simple repetitions of what had been said. When topics were related to personal experience, however, student talk often took the form of personal narratives,

and students appeared more concerned with communicating meaning as opposed to grammatically correct information. Ernst concluded that "when students have control over the topic of conversation, they are more likely to use a variety of communicative strategies," (p. 316), and that in terms of topic development, social demands and communicative functions, the nature of the task can be a more important variable than the organizational structure (e.g., small groups, dyads, etc.) of the classroom.

In recent years, a number of ESL educators and theorists have called attention to the potential benefits of using literature in the ESL classroom (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Carrasquillo, 1993; Ellison & Justica, 1989; Long, 1986; McKay, 1982; Povey, 1986), and advocate its inclusion in the ESL curriculum. They view the use of literature as a natural way to foster meaning-centered interaction in the classroom, to promote the development of strategies for meaning making in context, to utilize more fully students' intellectual abilities, to bring about greater cultural understanding, and to encourage the language learner to explore the power of words. These are views in need of systematic research.

Collaborative Learning

Small-group work in the classroom has been regarded by theorists and educators as fulfilling a variety of important educational functions. Small-group discussion

has been cited as a valuable and natural way for students to practice and acquire the discourse of a particular academic field (Bruffee, 1984, 1986), to develop their ability to generate and test hypotheses (Barnes & Todd, 1977; Bruffee, 1984), to provide each other with a meaningful social context in which to explore ideas, negotiate meaning and develop greater communication skills (Barnes & Todd, 1977; Bouton & Garth, 1983; Bruffee, 1984; Salmon & Claire, 1984), to assume and share with their peers responsibility for their own learning (Orem, 1987; Salmon & Claire, 1984), to acknowledge and tolerate different perspectives and opposing points of view (Bruffee, 1984; Forman & Cazden, 1985; Wiener, 1986), and to fulfill basic human needs for community and empowerment (Glasser, 1986; Holzman, 1986; Orem, 1987).

In recent years there has been some attempt to distinguish between collaborative learning and other types of small-group learning. Wiener (1986), citing the work of Bruffee (1984), claims that the collaborative model rests in large part on the kind of task students are required to perform together. Wiener asserts that "the group's effort to reach consensus by their own authority is the major factor that distinguishes collaborative learning from mere work in groups" (p. 54). Consensus, according to Wiener, does not mean uniformity

of thought but rather the collective judgment of a group of people as a result of a process of intellectual negotiation in which group members have advanced and defended their own ideas. The effect of this highly interactive process may result in changes in perspective on the part of individual group members.

Forman and Cazden (1985) also emphasize the importance of the task in collaborative learning contexts. According to Forman and Cazden, "Collaboration requires a mutual task in which the partners work together to produce something that neither could have produced alone" (p. 329). Another important feature of the collaborative task, Forman and Cazden claim, is that it requires group members to solve a problem, thus prompting group participants to establish a common set of assumptions, procedures, and information.

Stodolsky (1984) has developed a typology of different types of classroom instructional groups. In this typology, Stodolsky distinguishes between "completely cooperative" peer-work groups and "cooperative" peer work groups. In both types of peer groups, group members share a common goal and are expected to interact and contribute to the realization of each group's goals. The group product or outcome (e.g., demonstration, presentation, debate) is evaluated as a whole; group members are not evaluated individually. The

primary difference between these two groups is that in "completely cooperative" groups, members work together on all aspects of the group process or activity. In "cooperative" groups, however, individuals may work separately on different tasks and activities. Stodolsky's definition of "completely cooperative" peer-group work appears to be much closer to the concept of collaboration as described by Wiener (1986) and Forman and Cazden (1985) than is Stodolsky's definition of "cooperative" group work.

Peer-Led Literature Discussion Groups

Despite the many important benefits attributed to collaborative small-group learning, the transmission model, whereby teachers impart information to students, still predominates in most schools (Dillon & Searle, 1981; Goodlad, 1984; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). A number of theorists have underscored the idea that the social environment strongly influences the ways in which people think and perceive the world and that language plays an essential role in the ways people internalize the beliefs, values, and patterns of thought of a given culture (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985, 1991).

In recent years, researchers have begun to look at the ways in which small-group contexts influence how people talk about literature. Marshall, Smagorinsky, and

Smith (1995) have suggested that when students in class have the authority to engage actively in discussion of literature they are more likely to shape the discourse of the discussion. They claim that "if students are to be empowered in the classroom, not only must the teacher relinquish authority, but the students must be prepared to engage in substantive, demanding work" (p. 98).

Marshall, Smagorinsky, and Smith (1995) have also examined the responses of adults in book clubs and compared them to those in teacher-led classroom discussions. They found that book club members were much more likely to make positive responses (45.6%) or negative responses (11.1%) to their counterparts, whereas teachers tended to maintain a more aloof stance. Teachers merely acknowledged students' statements (16.2%); restated them (38.8%) or asked for an explanation (12.8%); expressions of disagreement almost never occurred. In addition, the researchers found, book members tended to elaborate on each other's reponses by cooperative turns, working together to develop an idea. However, when teachers attempted to elaborate on students' responses, they frequently utilized these responses to promote their own interpretations of the text.

Lewis (1997), while acknowledging the potential benefits of peer-led discussion groups, particularly the

opportunity they afford for more egalitarian talk structures, identifies some of the possible pitfalls of this type of classroom activity. Lewis asserts that attention must be given to the social relationships that exist among students both in and out of school. As Lewis states:

> Achieving social and interpretive power in the classroom also depended, in part, on allegiances formed in and out of school. These allegiances, often based on long-term friendships within the community, played a part in determining what was said during peer-led discussions and who was empowered to say it. (p. 188)

In spite of the important benefits attributed to collaborative small-group learning in the classroom and the use of literature with ESL students, no formal studies have been conducted with adult second-language learners in a collaborative context or with small-group responses to literature by ESL students. Previous studies have focused primarily on the effects of cooperative learning groups on children's performance in various academic subjects (Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, & Skon, 1981; Slavin, 1983) but have neglected to examine in any detail the processes involved in small-group learning, much less the processes of adult second-language learners in collaborative contexts. As Sharan (1984) states:

> The precise manner in which the process of language learning unfolds in the small group setting deserves intensive research. Only microanalytic studies of peer interactions in groups can document this

process. (p. 69)

This study reports on an investigation of this process with adult second-language learners in a collaborative-learning context.

CHAPTER III

PARTICIPANTS, MATERIALS, AND PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the participants, procedures for data collection, and analytical methods of the study. The study elicited responses of adult ESL students to short stories written in English through collaborative small-group discussions in order to describe the nature and range of individual response and the role of peer discussion on individual group member's responses.

A case study approach is the primary method of investigation. Such an approach is appropriate when an investigation explores a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life situation, when the distinction between the phenomenon and the context is not readily discernible, and when multiple sources of evidence are employed (Yin, 1984). Rosenblatt (1985) sees the act of reading as a transaction among reader, text, and context. She states:

> we need to see the reading act as an event involving a particular individual and a particular text, happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting, and as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group. We still can distinguish the elements, but we have to think of them, not as separate entities, but as aspects or phases of a dynamic process, in which all the elements take on their character as part of the organically-interrelated situation. (p. 100)

Case studies can provide the foundation for identifying, defining, and analyzing the important factors of a particular phenomenon. Petrosky (1985) argues that studies that explore the relationship of reading, response, and writing defy large-scale investigation, since we do not know enough about the major characteristics involved in the relationship.

Participants

Due to the extensive amount of data involved, the study was limited to four adult ESL learners enrolled in an intermediate-level ESL class, (the third level of a four-level ESL sequence), at a bilingual community college of the City University of New York. Three of the four students were female. Idamis, age 32, and Margarita, age 35, were married, had children, and had attended junior college in Puerto Rico where Idamis had completed 33 credits and Margarita had earned an A.S. degree as a social work assistant. Maria, age 20, was from the Dominican Republic, lived with her parents, and had received a G.E.D. in Spanish. Carlos, 21 and also single, had graduated from high school in Puerto Rico. At the time of the study, Carlos and Maria were in their third semester in college, and Idamis and Margarita were in their second and first semesters.

The personal data of the four participants reflect in many ways the larger demographic data of the

participants' class composition and those of the college itself, in which more than 70% are female, the majority of whom are married or divorced and have children. The participants' average age of 27 is exactly that of the entire college population. Moreover, virtually all ESL students at the college are native speakers of Spanish, as were the participants of this study as well as all the other students in this specific ESL class.

Selection of Texts

One of the most important considerations in using literary texts with ESL students is the selection of appropriate texts. A text which is overly difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will have few benefits (McKay, 1982). Brumfit and Carter (1986) emphasize the need to select texts to which students can respond immediately without the mediation of the instructor. To increase the likelihood of such response, texts should be related in some way to students' personal experiences and interests (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Carrasquillo, 1993; McKay, 1982; Littlewood, 1986), and should be accessible for discussion by a particular group of students (Brumfit & Carter, 1986).

This study focuses on the responses to short stories of adult ESL students at three different points in a semester: October, November and December during regularly scheduled classes, each of which was 80 minutes in

duration. For each month of the 3 months of the semester, students read three short stories in English, each related to a specific theme chosen by the course instructor. A synopsis of each story is provided in Appendix A. The texts were not abridged, simplified or annotated in any way. They contained no highlighting or explanation of key vocabulary, comprehension questions, introductory or cultural notes, illustrations, or any other type of support features commonly found in ESL textbooks. A list of the three themes and the specific stories is given below.

October: Male-Female Relationships

A Domestic Dilemma by Carson McCullers (10 pages)

Warm River by Erskine Caldwell (8 pages)

Long Walk to Forever by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (7 pages)

November: Imagination and Fantasy

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty by James Thurber (4 pages)

The Pomegranate Trees by William Saroyan (11 pages)

The Kugelmass Episode by Woody Allen (13 pages)

December: Journeys and Discoveries

War by Luigi Pirandello (5 pages)

Eveline by James Joyce (5 pages)

The Sojourner by Carson McCullers (10 pages)

Grouping the stories around a general theme was done for several reasons. Since the act of reading is an

active process of meaning creation involving integration of one's own expectations, purposes, prior knowledge, and experience with a written text (Iser, 1978; Smith, 1982), linking the stories around a central theme might provide students with a genuine purpose for reading and permit them to explore a theme with which they might identify. Moreover, exploration of texts similar in theme may provide interesting perspectives on the texts themselves (Nash, 1986).

According to Brumfit (1986), the ability to perceive and explore relationships between literary texts will be developed by reading texts deliberately associated. For some learners, the provocativeness and suitability of an underlying theme may be an important factor in their willingness to read and respond to a text (Littlewood, 1986). In addition, having students read and respond to texts at different points in a semester might provide a useful opportunity to observe students' patterns of response at a particular interval and to discern changes in response, if any, over an extended period of time.

As previously stated, the texts selected for use in this study were not abridged or simplified in any way. ESL theorists advocate the use of authentic text with second-language learners, because what is said in a particular text is inextricably bound with how it is said (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Long, 1986; Povey, 1986).

Moreover, students might be encouraged to look for cultural, social, or historical information about each text that will help them establish a perspective from which to frame their responses. Theory and research suggest that previously acquired knowledge provides a framework from which we view the world, and this includes the texts we read (Rumelhart, 1980).

There are no standardized instruments that can adequately describe the linguistic, structural and cultural features of a literary text. One of the most feasible ways to insure the appropriateness of a text is to rely on the collective judgment of those who know the population for whom the text is intended. As Littlewood (1986) states: "It is a question of estimating the general difficulty of the language in relation to the pupil's linguistic competence, on the basis of intuition or past experience" (p. 181). In choosing the nine short stories used in the study, each was given to two other instructors who have taught the same course at the school where the study's participants were enrolled. Each instructor was asked to evaluate each text holistically in terms of its linguistic, structural, and cultural features. All the texts were found by the teachers to be challenging yet accessible for ESL students who have the same English level as the participants in this study had.

Data Collection Procedures for Group Discussions

The principal procedure for data collection involved audio-taping of peer-group discussions. An effort was initially made to videotape classroom group discussions, but this proved to be impractical for several reasons. One, the setting up of video equipment was too time consuming and difficult to do in the classroom environment on a regular basis. Second, there were not sufficient video recorders available to record all the groups in the class. In collecting the data in a natural classroom setting, it was important that the four student participants in the study not feel that they were unduly being singled out for observation. To avoid this, all group discussions were audiotaped, a more manageable and practical procedure. Third, and perhaps most important, in a preliminary attempt to test the videotaping equipment, it was found that the sound system was very sensitive and picked up the voices of all the conversations going on around any one group, thus making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to understand the conversation in a single group.

The group discussion sessions were intended to give students a forum to extend their ideas and feelings about what they had read. Bleich (1975, 1980) and Rosenblatt (1994) believe that individual responses need to be broadened through the social exchange of ideas. Initial

responses are often limited and can be enhanced by exposure to other opinions and perspectives and by a rereading of the text. Carter (1986) contends that responses of second-language learners develop best with increased response to and confidence in working with the target language in a variety of integrated activities where inquiry and student-centered learning is the rule.

Having students share their responses to the same texts at different times in the same semester provided an opportunity for genuine collaboration to occur. Wiener (1986) claims that the success of any collaborative learning model or approach rests primarily on the initial task students are asked to perform in groups. The task should lead to an understanding or outcome that is, to as great an extent possible, the result of a process of negotiation among the group's members. Wiener puts forward a set of criteria for establishing and evaluating a collaborative task. These criteria include the following: (a) The task should be sufficiently challenging to students yet not so difficult as to stifle the collaborative effort; (b) The task should not have a pre-conceived answer or solution; (c) The task should lead to an answer or solution that represents as much as possible the entire group's collective judgment and effort; (d) The task should engage students in conversation among themselves at many points in the

reading and writing process; (e) The task should provide the opportunity for students to better understand how knowledge is acquired and how it evolves; and, (f) The task should allow students to observe their own processes as individual learners and collaborators.

The following task, based on the guidelines listed above, was given to the entire class, including the four participants in the study. At the start of the first series of group discussions, students were asked to imagine themselves as editors of a magazine that had received unsolicited short stories for possible publication in their "magazine." Students were asked to give their "magazine" a name and to develop criteria to select one of the three stories for inclusion in the group's "magazine." These criteria, it was noted, could be changed at any point in the activity. Students were free to read and discuss the three stories in any order they wished but were encouraged to limit discussion of each story to one class period. Students were also free to discuss the stories in whatever way they thought appropriate. In preparation for the first group discussion, students were told they could write down questions which they could then try and answer as a group, bring a written summary of the story or a list of words that impeded their understanding. However, the decision to prepare in any formal way for the group

discussion was left up to each group during this first planning session.

Upon conclusion of the class periods allotted for discussion of the three stories, the group was given another class period to prepare a 20-minute presentation to be given to the rest of the class. The presentation was to include, at a minimum, the following three elements: (a) The group's understanding of each of the three stories; (b) The story the group had selected for publication in its "magazine" and the reasons for this choice; (c) An explanation of what each story shows or reveals about the general theme (i.e., relationships between men and women; imagination and fantasy; journeys and discoveries). Each member of the group was expected to participate equally in the presentation, whose organization in terms of content and sequence was to be determined by the group. Each group was to be evaluated by the other groups in the class as well as the teacher using a list of questions prepared by the teacher. (A list of the questions is given in Appendix B.) Each group was also required to evaluate its own presentation using the same set of questions. The questions to be used in the evaluation were distributed by the teacher at the start of the class session devoted to planning for the presentation. Each group's presentation was to be followed by questions from the rest of the class.

Brumfit (1986) argues that response to a text in all its aspects should be allowed to develop in an integrated fashion. The task assigned to each group was intended to permit students to consider each text in terms of a broad range of responses. The task was designed to encourage students to describe, interpret, evaluate, and become engaged with each work. Such a range of potential responses is consistent with general categories of response first developed by Purves with Rippere (1968), and later used or modified in other studies of response (Beach, 1973; Galda, 1982).

For the second and third presentations of the semester that took place in November and December, item one above was changed from the group's understanding of each story to what the group thought were the most important aspects of each story. This change was made at the request of the students after the first group presentations in October; they had felt that since many of the six groups in the class had presented similar understandings of each story, hearing the same ideas expressed several times, albeit in different words, was repetitious and tedious. Changing this element of the presentation to include the group's choice of each story's most significant aspects might, they believed, allow for greater diversity of thought and opinion. Aspects were taken to mean anything the group thought

made the story special or significant, e.g., the story's setting, a particular event, a character's psychological makeup or personality, the author's style, etc. The group's preparation for its presentation as well as the presentation itself were also audiotaped.

Analytical Procedures

Developing an appropriate methodology to analyze the students' group discussions posed a particular set of challenges and concerns. Galda (1983) calls attention to the need for distinguishing oral group response from individual written response. She argues that individual oral response needs to be considered within the context of the emerging group response, since the latter is a highly interactive process. Galda advocates giving a holistic rating to each turn taken by each group member in the flow of conversation. Each turn may include more than one statement. This method of analysis not only diminishes the potential difficulty of defining "statement" in oral discourse but, as in the case of holistic essay analysis, allows for examination of the principal thrust or emphasis of each turn. Such a method may permit the researcher to observe response patterns of individual group members as well as how individual responses interact.

The method of analysis for the oral group discussion builds on the oral response classification system

developed by Galda (1983). This system, described below, is essentially an adaptation or synthesis of analytical instruments developed by Odell and Cooper (1976) and Applebee (1978). The system encompasses four broad categories: involvement, comprehension, inference, and evaluation. These are similar to the four types of statement categories proposed by Odell and Cooper (1976), which are, respectively, personal, descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative. The first three categories of Galda's instrument, i.e., involvement, comprehension, and inference are further classified as being of two types, text-centered or reader-centered.

Involvement statements refer to the reader's engagement with the text. A reader-centered involvement statement is a statement in which the reader views the text as a form of personal experience. A text-centered involvement statement indicates the reader's perception of the text in terms of his or her own knowledge of the world.

Comprehension statements involve statements which show an understanding or lack of understanding about the literal meaning of a text. Text-centered comprehension generally appears in the form of retelling factual information about the plot, characters or setting. Reader-centered comprehension demonstrates a reader's understanding or lack of understanding about a particular

point or fact in the text.

Inference statements reflect a reader's attempt to interpret what he or she has read. Text-centered inferences are statements about that which is implicit in the text. A reader-centered inference reveals both an interpretive response, and an inferred reason for that response.

Evaluation statements are divided into four subcategories, which Applebee (1978) has related to Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Applebee's hierarchical model of evaluation attempts to describe how a reader evaluates as opposed to what a reader evaluates. These four subcategories of evaluation are termed undifferentiated, categoric, analytic, and generalization.

Undifferentiated evaluation statements involve unelaborated responses or opinions about a particular aspect of a text. Categoric evaluation reflects an effort to describe attributes of personal response, such as "interesting" or "depressing," or attributes of texts, such as "love story" or "mystery story." A third kind of evaluation, analytic, is primarily concerned with how the text works as a whole and how personal reactions are influenced by that whole. This type of evaluation seeks to explain how the text achieved its effect on the reader. The fourth and final stage of evaluation,

generalization, indicates a reader's expression of the general meaning or theme of a text.

A common problem in describing response to literature in any systematic way has to do with the difficulty of developing and applying specific categories of response that accurately fit the data collected (Bleich, 1980). While such a situation may be viewed as a problematic feature of conducting research in response to literature, it may also be perceived as providing certain potential benefits. Applebee (1978) claims that refinement and clarification of the various elements of response as recombinations help bring these elements into new relationships with each other and may yield new understanding of the complex phenomenon of literary response.

While there has been no previous research on response to literature using adult second-language students within a classroom context, this study identifies categories of response realized in authentic discussions of ESL students. This process or technique is consistent with Glaser and Strauss' (1967) theory on conducting hypothesis-generating research and Brause and Mayher's (1982) model for generating hypotheses in descriptive studies.

They recommend that in cases where pre-existing categories of analysis do not accurately reflect the data

collected, tentative categories and their characteristics be identified upon intensive examination of the data. These categories are then tested against the data to determine their suitability and accuracy. If the tentative categories do not accurately describe the data, they are then refined, recombined, and retested against the original data until they effectively express the nature of the responses or transactions.

Benton (1984) cautions against the exclusive use of pre-determined categories of analysis. Extensive quantification of stated responses, whether oral or written, may run the risk of missing the living quality of the mental processes involved in response to literature. Citing the work of Britton (1971) and Barnes (1976), Benton advocates that the researcher be primarily concerned with what a reader means by a particular response rather than with how that response should be classified. Although this approach lacks the neatness of content analysis, it may yield greater accuracy and insight.

Benton (1984) recommends that the researcher make informal notes alongside the transcriptions of oral responses and written essay responses as a way to facilitate the process of interpretation. The researcher then reexamines these notes with an eye toward identifying emerging patterns. From the intimate

knowledge of the data that are acquired through this process, the researcher is better able to identify the most appropriate ways to accurately describe and analyze the data. This method, used in combination with the afore-mentioned methods of analysis, may result in greater understanding of the response processes of adult second-language learners.

CHAPTER IV

IDENTIFYING CATEGORIES OF RESPONSE

In the field of response to literature, categories of response have been developed to identify the responses of individuals to specific texts (Applebee, 1978; Galda, 1983; Purves & Rippere, 1968) and of individuals discussing their responses in groups (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995; W. Taylor, 1988). In preliminary attempts to categorize the responses of the four adult ESL students who participated in the collaborative group discussions in this study, the categories utilized in each of the studies mentioned above were tested for their appropriateness in analyzing the data of the current study. The categories of each study will be briefly discussed and the process of applying them to the data will be described.

In attempting to apply these categories to the data, there were numerous instances in which the students' responses could be labelled as belonging to a particular category used in another study, but ultimately these various categories, for reasons that will be elaborated below, failed to capture the broad range of strategies students were utilizing to make meaning of a particular

text, did not accurately reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of the students' talk that was an essential feature of the collaborative group discussions, and did not take into account the special characteristics of talk by nonnative speakers of English. This should not be altogether surprising since some sets of categories of response had been developed to describe the responses of individuals (Applebee, 1978; Galda, 1983; Purves & Rippere, 1968), not those of individuals responding collaboratively to a literary text, while categories used by Eeds and Wells (1989) involved a study where the group discussion was led by a teacher and those used by W. Taylor (1988) were applied to group discussions by native speakers of English.

Purves and Rippere (1968) identified four main categories of response to literature: (a) personal; (b) descriptive; (c) interpretive; (d) evaluative. These categories were generated from written responses and were originally intended to classify or describe written responses to texts. These categories of response impose a certain rigidity that does not allow the participants' perspective to be taken into account and does not afford the means to fully convey the multiple functions of a given utterance or response. With respect to neglecting the participants' perspective, previously used categories force the researcher into choosing one category of

response over another based on the words of a particular utterance, and not the underlying intention(s) of the individual making that utterance. For example, an individual might state that a text was "not very interesting." Employing existing categories of response, this utterance would be identified as having an evaluative focus, an attempt to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a given work. However, in the context of a group discussion, this same utterance might serve as a prelude for the clarification of the text's meaning or significance. The person who described the text as "not very interesting" may not have fully understood it and thus may have used this utterance as a face saving remark or as a way to initiate discussion of aspects of the text that were not clear. Therefore, each utterance cannot be simply seen in isolation but needs to be viewed holistically, giving careful attention to the complex interaction of personal, social, cognitive, and textual factors that influence response.

It has also been noted that any given utterance can simultaneously serve more than one function (Barnes & Todd, 1977). This phenomenon is clearly in evidence in all of the students' collaborative group discussions. For example, a participant who speculates on why a character of a story acted in a particular way may not only be trying to understand the character's actions in a

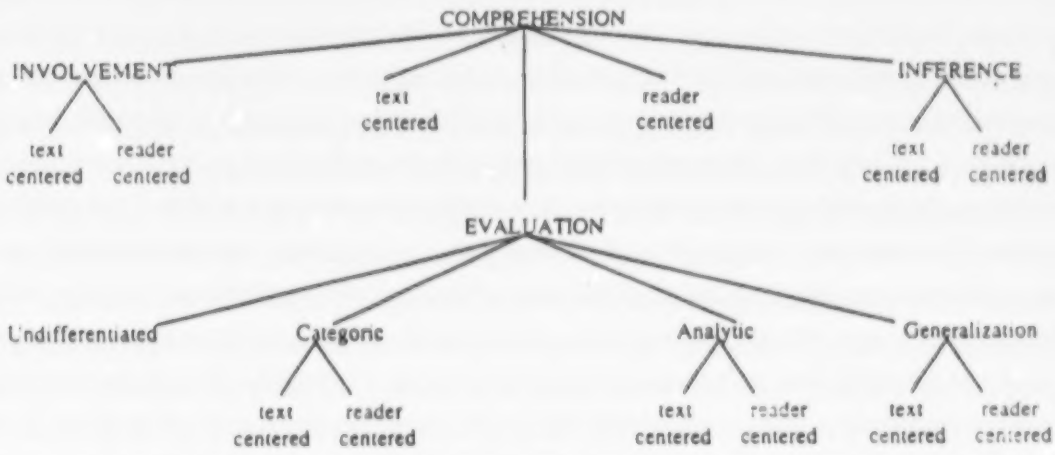
certain situation, he or she may also be inviting other group members to join in the speculation. By admitting his or her uncertainty about something, the participant may also be encouraging others to share their doubts or opinions. By the same token, a participant who corrects a peer's pronunciation may or may not be attempting to assist that person in expressing a thought clearly or correctly. While the correction of another's pronunciation may be a friendly attempt to help another pronounce a word properly, it may also be more of an effort to confirm that despite the fact that what one's interlocutor has said was mispronounced, the intended meaning was in fact understood. An attempt to correct another speaker's pronunciation may serve more as a way to establish one's hierarchy within the group; the person making the correction may be trying to show that he or she has a superior command of the language than the one who has mispronounced a word. Thus an utterance related to pronunciation may be an attempt to help another with conventional pronunciation, to confirm one's understanding, or to assign status within the group, or a combination thereof. Intentionality can be hypothesized by examining the full context of any given utterance, including an examination of previous group discussions and the various relationships evolving within the group.

Similar problems arose when attempts were made to

utilize categories developed by Applebee (1978), as described in Chapter III, and Galda (1983). Galda proposed taking Applebee's model and further subdividing each category or subcategory into text-centered and reader-centered responses. Her oral response classification system appears below.

Figure 1

Galda's (1983) Oral Classification System



Note. From "Research in Response to Literature," by L. Galda. 1983. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 16(3), p. 5.

Galda (1983) defined text-centered comprehension statements as restatements about elements of the text (e.g., plot, setting, description of characters) while reader-centered comprehension statements generally take the form of personal complaints about not having understood something in the text. A reader-centered involvement statement shows that the reader sees the text

as a virtual experience and has been able to see him or herself in a similar situation. A text-centered involvement statement, such as "This is a typical relationship," indicates the reader's perception of the text is based on his or her knowledge of the world. Inference statements, those which demonstrate an interpretation of the text, are said to be text-centered when they assert that which is implicit in the text. Reader-centered inference statements are those which reflect an inferred response and an inferred reason for that response.

In applying Applebee's (1978) categories and Galda's (1983) elaboration of those categories, problems similar to those found with Purves and Rippere's (1968)categories arose. Here again, there were many segments of talk by the four adult ESL learners that could be confidently classified as falling in a specific category identified by these researchers. However, a distinguishing feature of the four adult ESL learners' talk was its highly tentative and speculative nature. For example, in one segment of a group conversation that took place after the students had read the third story related to the general theme of Male-Female Relationships, we see a series of statements made that, using Galda's categories, would be classified initially as "text-centered inference" statements as students attempt to describe the inner

state of various characters in the stories. This leads inadvertently to an attempt to describe the type of stories these three represent, "different kinds of love," a statement Galda would call "text-centered categoric evaluation," since a specific attribute of a text is being identified.

Later in the conversation one student makes the following statement: "So what you're trying to say is that love depends on the age (of a person)," a statement Galda (1983) would categorize as an evaluation involving "text-centered generalization" since it shows an attempt to analyze and generalize from the meaning or theme of a text.

From the participants' perspective, however, the initial attempts to compare the stories are not statements of inference but serve primarily as a way for the participants to confirm their understanding of the text by reviewing some of the main aspects of each text, and that this brief summary review is carried out through a cursory comparison of the texts. This confirmation of understanding suddenly results in the speculative statement, "So what you're trying to say is that love depends on the age," uttered in a very tentative, questioning tone. Group members then take turns exploring and testing this idea but do not arrive at a clear consensus on the matter before moving on to another

topic. This statement, which under Galda's (1983) classification system appears to carry with it a certain air of authority since it is placed at the upper end of the evaluation scale, in this context is highly speculative and does not lead to a clear statement of generalization about the story's meaning but rather leads to a brief discussion of differences between younger and older people.

As Galda (1983) herself states, "A major problem in describing group discussions is that discussions are interactive and need to be viewed in light of what other members of the group are saying" (p. 4). Galda's classification system was inappropriate for use with the data collected in this study since it did not provide any way to capture faithfully the highly speculative nature of the group's talk or the group's collaborative process, particularly the way students' talk served to promote completion of the collaborative task, to regulate behavior within the group, and to monitor each other's use of the second language.

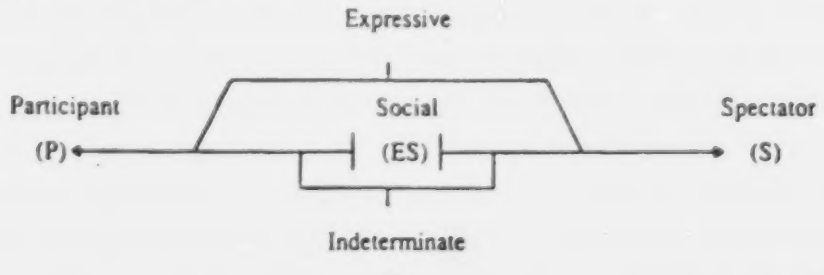
One other set of pre-established categories was tested before it too was rejected. These categories, developed by W. Taylor (1988), come out of the work of Britton (1970), who identified two basic roles of language: one, the participant role, we use as we act on and interact with our world while the second, spectator

role language, we use as we elaborate and reorganize possible symbolic constructions of the world. Britton refers to language produced for participant purposes as transactional-mode; language at the spectator end of the spectrum he calls poetic-mode. At the center of the two he puts a third mode, the expressive, which is said to be both the source and the means for the development of the other two modes. W. Taylor also views expressive speech as "the language of exploration and discovery as we talk or write our way toward comprehension. It performs both social and heuristic functions" (p. 133).

Using Britton's paradigm, W. Taylor (1988) came up with the following modified model of language function for group discussions of literary texts in which he identified four basic types of utterances. These are: (a) participant-role; (b) expressive-social; (c) spectator-role; (d) indeterminate.

Figure 2

W. Taylor's (1988) Modified Model of Language Function (for group discussions)



Note. From Teachers as Researchers (p. 139), edited by N. Charnery, 1988. Calgary, Canada: Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

W. Taylor (1988) describes participant-role talk as sometimes being fully transactional, task-oriented statements, but more often as being tentative and exploratory, usually directed by internal efforts to make sense of the text. Expressive-social utterances are those that employ expressive language for social purposes within the group, including insults, jokes and personal comments. Spectator-role utterances are those that indicate that the speaker is responding to the text as "onlookers to the virtual experiences presented by the literary works" (W. Taylor, p. 137).

W. Taylor (1988) identified six different subcategories of participant-role utterances. They are (a) enacting, by which group members appeared as if they were assuming the role of a character in the text and using speech in the way the character might have; (b) sensory response, whereby students expressed sensory experiences, such as seeing, hearing or touching, as a reaction to what they had read; (c) context creation, in which readers suspend disbelief and treat the characters and situations in the text as if they existed in the real world; (d) response to form, in which group members attempt to identify the formal qualities or structure of parts or the whole of a literary work; (e) content evaluation, which involves attempts by readers to evaluate the characters' actions and circumstances rather

than any attempt to evaluate the truthfulness or value of the text as a whole; and (f) personal experience, in which readers relate aspects of the virtual experience of a text to personal experience and/or one's knowledge of the world. The final basic category in W. Taylor's model is placed under the heading Indeterminate. As the name suggests, indeterminate utterances are those whose function is not clear and cannot be reliably placed in any of the other established categories.

Initially, W. Taylor's (1988) categories appeared quite promising as a way to describe and analyze the data of the group discussions of the four adult ESL learners in this study. His categories had been developed by using recorded conversations of twelfth-grade students of "average ability" as part of the regular classroom activity in their English class, without the presence or intervention of a teacher. One of the primary appeals of W. Taylor's categories is that they emphasize the tentative, exploratory, and speculative nature of students' group discussions and identify a variety of ways or stances through which readers respond to and, in essence, recreate a literary work. In fact, all of the subcategories of spectator-role utterances that W. Taylor identified in his study are to be found to varying degrees throughout the group discussions of the adult ESL learners in this study. However, in examining the

transcripts of these sessions, it appears that many of W. Taylor's subcategories of spectator-role utterances, such as enacting, sensory response, context creation, and content evaluation, were for the adult ESL students ways and, in some cases, strategies by which they demonstrated, confirmed, or explored their understanding(s) of specific aspects of a text or the text as a whole.

In addition, there were many instances where it was difficult to determine whether or not an utterance could be classified as "participant-role" or "spectator-role." W. Taylor (1988) himself found this to be a problem as well, so much so that he was compelled to create a third category which he labelled "Indeterminate." This issue is closely tied to another reason why W. Taylor's categories were ultimately deemed inappropriate for analyzing the data in this study. Although W. Taylor believed that many of the participant-role utterances were tentative and exploratory, he chose not to specify or categorize further the focus or type of this participant-role talk. This lack of specificity was a weak point in the W. Taylor classification scheme; in looking at the talk of the ESL students, it appeared not only possible to identify the range of purposes to which these students put this exploratory, speculative talk but it was felt that specifying in greater detail the focus

of this exploratory talk would yield more insight into the concerns and response styles of the group as well as its individual members.

Finally, W. Taylor's (1988) categories, as was the case with all the other categories established by other researchers (Applebee, 1978; Galda, 1983; Purves & Rippere, 1968), did not contain any categories that specifically described the collaborative group process or the participants' concern with or attention to their use of language, including, for example, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammar, that was one of the distinguishing characteristics of the ESL students' talk.

Identifying and Testing New Categories

Once it was determined that traditional or pre-established categories of response were not appropriate for analyzing the data of this study, a different approach was utilized. This involved looking at the data with fresh eyes and trying to see events from the participants' perspective. What were they attempting to do with their talk? How were they attempting to make meaning of a given text and what strategies did they employ? How did the group negotiate the tasks that they had to perform, what roles did group members play in this collaboration and what factors facilitated or impeded the collaborative process? Using the methodology of hypothesis-generating research (Brause, 1991), a

preliminary effort was made to identify a "typical" group session and to identify its essential characteristics or features. By identifying these features, specific criteria for determining or mapping patterns of discussion might emerge. It was also hoped that by identifying such patterns, a model that describes the meaning-making processes of adult ESL learners within a collaborative context could also be forged. Such a model would include the various functions of language and would show the complex interrelationship between meaning-making, cognitive strategies and the collaboration within the group.

What became apparent in examining the data was that the four ESL students were often unsure of certain elements in the text and, in a few cases, of the overall sense of the whole text. They appeared to have a need to go over or confirm their understanding(s) of the text, often by sharing or comparing what they had understood. For the most part, individuals appeared free to raise questions about or call attention to aspects of the text they did not understand. Oftentimes these questions and comments became the focus of conversation as group members attempted to clarify their doubts and uncertainties. Where one member was able to explain a particular point to the satisfaction of the group, the conversation would generally shift to another topic or

issue. However, there were many times when the group would offer competing interpretations or explanations or when all members of the group appeared stumped and at a loss to arrive at an explanation that was readily accepted by some or all of the other group members. This type of speculative talk sometimes led to a consensus of interpretation or understanding but oftentimes did not. Another important feature of the group talk appeared to be students' concern with or interest in finding an overarching "message" or "lesson" from the text or in identifying the author's intention or purpose in writing a story. Attempts to identify an overall message or purpose generally occurred only when some, if not all, of the group members felt they had achieved a general understanding of a given text.

Compounding the problem of categorizing the students' talk was the issue of the group's collaborative process, the ways in which group members shifted the focus of conversation or determined what would be discussed, how they monitored or regulated participation and roles within the group as well as their attention to matters of language use, including pronunciation, vocabulary, and even grammatical usage. This matter was of particular importance since, unlike many other studies of student response to literature, the participants in this study formed an independent, self-regulating group

that had no teacher or external authority to direct or guide the discussion.

Initial efforts to describe what appeared to be the two main components of the group process, their attempts to make meaning of the text and their attempts to work together as a group, resulted in a preliminary model, which appears in Figure 3 on the following page.

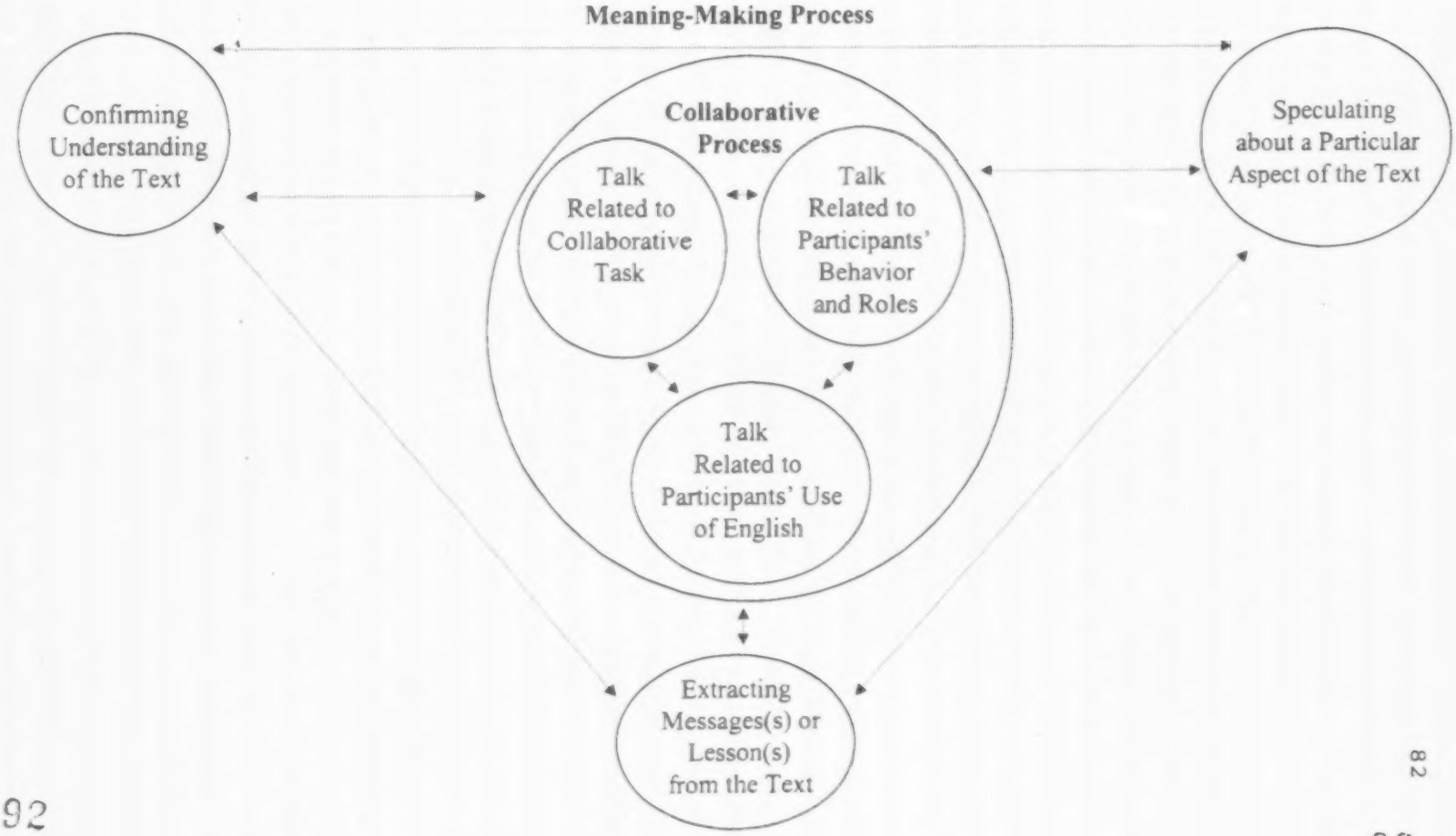
Description of Preliminary Model of Meaning-Making Process of Adult ESL Learners in Collaborative Group Discussions

The preliminary model attempted to document the meaning-making process of this group of adult ESL learners as it functioned within a collaborative-learning framework. Since the group's talk was at the heart of the collaborative process, it was placed at the center of the model, like the center of a wheel from which everything else extends. As with a bicycle wheel, the wheel's center has spokes connecting it to an outer section, the parts of which are also connected to each other.

The model's center, the collaborative process, contained three main sections, each one connected to the other two. These three sections at the center described the three main types of talk that formed the core of the group's collaboration. These three types of talk were: (a) talk related to the collaborative task; (b) talk

Figure 3

Preliminary Model of the Meaning-Making Process of Adult ESL Learners in Collaborative Group Discussions of Short Stories in English


Meaning-Making Process
Confirming Understanding of the Text
Collaborative Process
Talk Related to Collaborative Task
Talk Related to Participants' Behavior and Roles
Talk Related to Participants' Use of English
Speculating about a Particular Aspect of the Text
Extracting Messages(s) or Lesson(s) from the Text

related to participants' behavior or roles within the group; (c) talk related to participants' use of English. Each of these three categories contained subcategories that are listed and exemplified below.

Types of Group Talk

Talk Related to the Collaborative Task

- Establishing, clarifying or altering the task, topic, or assignment;
- Establishing and refining procedures to carry out the task;
- Giving directions to locate a specific word, phrase, or passage in the text;
- Sharing procedures or strategies about the reading process.

Talk Related to Participants' Behavior or Roles

- Bringing a member or members back to task;
- Encouraging a member to participate or develop an idea;
- Agreeing with another member's idea or confirming understanding of another member's idea;
- Supplying a word or phrase to complete another member's idea;
- Asking a group member to repeat an idea;
- Establishing, recognizing, or evaluating participants' roles or contributions;
- Competing to get or maintain a turn or yielding a turn

in the conversation;

- Maintaining social relations within the group;
- Expressing feelings about working in the group, the group process, or another group member

Talk Related to Participants' Use of English

- Attempts to confirm or correct members' pronunciation;
- Attempts to confirm or correct members' use of vocabulary or idiomatic expressions;
- Attempts to confirm or correct members' grammar or syntax;

In addition, another set of categories was developed to describe the meaning-making process of the group. It was determined that the group's talk could be classified into three main categories: confirming understanding of the text; speculating about a particular aspect of a text; extracting a message or lesson from the text. These three categories and their elements are listed below.

Confirming Understanding of the Text

- Summarizing parts of or the whole text;
- Clarifying details or information in the text;
- Translating words, phrases, and passages;
- Connecting the text to personal experience;
- Recalling feelings while reading the text;
- Expressing like or dislike of a particular element of

the text or the text as a whole;

- Connecting the text to another text.

Speculating about a Particular Aspect of the Text

- Motives for characters' behavior;
- Continuation of story (i.e., what will happen after the story ends);
- Conflict resolution (i.e., how a problem or conflict might have been resolved);
- Reader's imagined role (i.e., what the reader would do if he/she were in the character's situation);
- Author's purpose or intention;
- Significance or meaning of the title;
- Issues raised by the text;
- Meaning of symbolism identified in the text;
- Implied relationships between characters

Extracting a Message or Lesson from the Text

Examples of Types of Utterances

Listed below are examples of utterances for each category and subcategory. These include statements by individuals or excerpts of talk by more than one group member. Each member's name is designated by the following letters: CA for Carlos, MG for Margarita, ID for Idamis, and MA for Maria. In addition, the following notations will be used to clarify the participants' talk. Words in parentheses, ( ), indicate explanation or

commentary about participants' utterances. In some cases, students' utterances may not be understandable. Words in brackets, [ ], indicate the way a native speaker would probably express the idea. In other instances, participants speak in their native Spanish. In such cases, the English translation or equivalent is provided within curly brackets { }.

Talk Related to the Collaborative Task

- Establishing, clarifying, or altering the task, topic, or assignment (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

ID: What are we gonna talk about?

MG: About the story "Warm River."

- Establishing or refining procedures to carry out the task (from the group's discussion of "The Pomegranate Trees")

MG: But, but this discussion should be with the questions, like the first one, like the other discussion. You remember that we did.

ID: No, pero {but}.

MG: Some, some title.

MA: Oh yeah.

MG: With questions.

MA: We made some questions.

MG: About the lesson. About the title.

ID: We made the questions about the title we have to

relate to the story.

MG: About the lesson. What mean everything.

CA: What, what is the relationship between the title and the story.

MG: We are doing something but.

ID: We doing it. ¿Tu no estas escribiendo? {You're not writing it down?}

- Giving directions to locate a specific word, phrase, or passage in the text (from the group's discussion of "Eveline")

CA: Yeah. Yeah. She was imagine that she had an affair, that she, you know, she ...

ID: (interrupting him) Where you see that?

MG: In what page?

CA: Over here. I'm gonna show you. When, when she met this guy.

MG: I'm, I'm confused in that part.

CA: When she met Frank.

ID: Frank?

CA: Yeah.

MG: In the ...

MA: In the third page.

MG: Third page, second paragraph.

CA: I think it's the second paragraph.

MG: Let's read it.

- Sharing procedures or strategies about the reading

process (from the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty")

MG: If we don't understand, we are supposed to, to look for, for the meaning.

MA: Yeah.

CA: If you don't know, where you going to go to look? Sometimes I, I ...

MG: Sometimes it's not necessary to understand the whole words. [all the words]

CA: Yeah, that's right. And if you don't understand sometimes, if you don't understand a word, you gotta try to get the idea from the sentence.

MG: (simultaneously) You gotta understand the, the message.

MA: That's what I do.

CA: You don't have to go every time to look at the dictionary. You gotta use your brain.

MA: Yeah, that's what I do.

CA: Right, Idamis?

Talk Related to Participants' Behavior or Roles

- Bringing group members back to task (from the group's discussion of "Eveline")

CA: Yesterday I couldn't talk because, you know, my house was broke, my house was broken [into].

MG: (attempting to cut off talk of personal matters and bring Carlos back to task) O.K. Let's begin with

the story. Carlos.

CA: "Eveline" story is about Eveline's feeling[s].

- Encouraging or inviting members to participate or develop their idea (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

ID: How you felt about the story?

CA: How do I feel about the story?

ID: Mmhm.

CA: (in a joking tone) Oh, my God! I feel so ...

MA: Yes? Yes?

CA: I want to read it again!

ID: Go ahead!

MA: So do it! (Everyone laughs)

- Agreeing with, confirming understanding of, or asking for confirmation of another member's idea. These are often brief utterances, such as "yeah," "uh huh," or "mmhm," that indicate that a member agrees with or understands another member's idea.
- Supplying a word or phrase to complete another member's idea or thought (from group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

MA: We are discussing (Maria pauses briefly)

ID: Positive and negative things, right?

CA: Yeah, yeah.

MG: Positive and negative things. We are explaining.

MA: We are discussing that.

- Asking another member to repeat or restate an idea (from group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty")

CA: (reading aloud from a dictionary) "Mongrel. A type person."

MG: Huh? Dime, Carlos. {Tell me, Carlos}

CA: ¡Mira! Aquí dice {Look! Here it says} "A dog, a dog of mixed breed." Mongrel, mongrel. I don't know. I don't know what it is.

MG: Dílo en español. {Say it in Spanish.}

- Recognizing, evaluating or establishing participants' roles or contributions (from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

MG: Today you will be our guide. You will be ...

CA: I am.

MA: Yeah.

MG: Yeah.

MA: He is, he is, um, the hero of us.

MG: Yeah.

CA: The hero?

MA: Our hero.

CA: Don't make me nervous.

MG: Yeah. You will be the responsible.

MA: Yeah, of our group.

MG: Of our discussion, okay?

MA: Because he is the only man in here.

MG: Yeah.

- Competing to get or maintain a turn or yielding a turn in the conversation

CA: But let me, let me tell you what I think about it

- Maintaining social relations within the group (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

CA: How's your sore throat?

ID: Hmmm?

CA: How's your sore throat?

ID: Better, thanks.

- Expressing feelings about working in the group, the group process or about another group member (from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

MA: Each one of us have a different, um, opinion about the, the message from the story.

MG: No, I think it's similar our opinions.

MA: Well, I think that I am agree with everything that you have. (laughs)

ID: Me too.

MG: That's the easy way.

CA: You gotta complain, you know. You don't supposed to be against what I, what I say.

MA: No, if I'm agree, I agree. If I don't like something, I say I don't like this and I want to go in this way.

CA: That's what make the conversation interesting.

(Imitating an argument) I don't like this. I like this. I don't like this because that, that, that.

MA: No, if I like it I don't going to say ...

ID: So, I don't see no complaints today.

Talk Related to Participants' Use of English

- Attempts to confirm or correct participants' pronunciation (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

MA: I was so curious, when she start to ask ...

CA: (in a somewhat hostile tone) You were so what?

MA: So curious. (pronouncing it "coorious")

CA: Curious. (correcting Maria's pronunciation)

ID: Curious. (repeating the correct pronunciation)

MA: Curious (trying to pronounce the word correctly) when, when, what's her name?

ID: Gretchen.

MA: When Gretchen start to ask her, ask him if he loves her, if he, a lot of questions.

- Attempts to confirm or correct participants' use of vocabulary or idiomatic expressions (from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

CA: You know, you want to be .... ¿Cómo se dice, "en privado?" {How do you say "in private?"}

MA: Private.

ID: Private.

CA: You know, you want to talk in private, yeah.

MG: Mmhmm. (in agreement)

CA: You want nobody hear your conversation.

MA: Yeah.

- Attempts to confirm or correct participants' grammar or syntax (from the group's discussion of "A Domestic Dilemma")

MA: She is in the home but she didn't do nothing to take care of ...

MG: Anything (correcting Maria's misuse of the double negative)

MA: Anything (incorporating the correction) to take care of them. She is all the time drinking.

It should be emphasized that the different types of talk constantly flow back and forth and that at any moment one type of talk may suddenly lead or yield to another type of talk. For example, in the following excerpt, taken from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever," we see how the group's talk moves back and forth between its first rather tentative efforts to connect the story with the title the group had already chosen for its imaginary magazine, its efforts to regulate its members' roles and contributions as well as an attempt at various points to establish what the group's focus of conversation should be, which at the end includes a brief discussion of what should be talked about in the next period.

CA: But tell me the relation between the title of the story and the title of the magazine.

MA: That's why [what] I am, that's why {what} I am ...

CA: (breaking in) You are getting off the question.

MA: talking [saying].

MG: No, Carlos!

MA: I am explaining.

MG: That she, they became together.

CA: Yeah, that they became together.

MA: That they became together and the true or false is the, um, maybe ...

CA: O.K.

MA: Don't worry, be happy. (She is using a favorite expression of Carlos' that he uses to smooth over differences.)

CA: That's right. (Idamis and Maria laugh.)

MG: O.K.

CA: If you are worried I'm gonna give you my home number. Call me. I make you happy. (chuckles)

MG: I think that, that's, uh.

CA: Let's finish it up.

MA: We have a lot.

CA: It's time, it's time.

MA: The time is not over.

MG: No, no.

MA: The time is not over.

ID: No, not yet.

MG: The thing, the thing that Maria said, that they became together, and it's true or false.

ID: Yeah, that's true.

CA: Yeah.

MG: It's the choice of the reader. The reader's choice.

MA: Yeah.

MG: To think that it's all true or it's false or what's happened later, or something like that.

MA: If, if what the, if, if we are agree with that decision that she took. Right? I think that's the true or false.

MG: Mm. Hm.

CA: The true [part] of the story was that they have each other. The false [part] of the story was they didn't love each other.

MA: (laughs) The oppositive [opposite] things.

CA: No, the story is, our magazine's title is "True or False."

MA: Yeah, it's true or false, but maybe we can change the title.

CA: We don't want to change it.

MA: If you, if you want.

CA: It's a nice title.

MA: So, listen.

ID: No, we could change it.

MA: It's a nice title. It's a nice title.

MG: No, we have to decide later, okay? Don't worry about it now.

CA: Don't worry, be happy.

MA: Listen, if we have to decide it because ...

MG: Yeah. Like a group. We have to agree.

MA: We can change.

MG: We have to take decisions like a group. We have to agree in a lot of things. In the next period.

CA: Yeah.

MA: You know the magazine title.

CA: So, what we gonna do tomorrow?

MG: We have to do this in the next period. Not tomorrow. In the next period. At 11 o'clock. We have to do this tomorrow for the presentation.

CA: All right.

The same dynamic is at work both between the group's collaborative process and its process of making meaning of a given text. This is not surprising since one of the basic functions or purposes of the group's collaborative process is to make meaning of the text by sharing and comparing individuals' understanding(s), opinions, doubts, and questions of what has been read. Thus, discussion related to the collaborative process will constantly flow back and forth between talk related to the group's task, behavior, or use of English and talk

that focuses directly on making meaning of the text. Listed below are examples of utterances for each category and subcategory that relate to the meaning-making process of the group.

Confirming Understanding of the Text

- Summarizing parts of or the whole text (from the group's discussion of "A Domestic Dilemma")

CA: The problem is a woman. She is an alcoholic woman.

MA: The story is about a, a, it's, it's something that happen not regular, not regularly in the house.

CA: Yeah, most of the time it happens with a man, not with a woman. It isn't frequently when it happens with a woman.

MG: And what happened with the man?

MA: In this case, the man have, have to, to ...

CA: Has to take, has to what?

MA: Has to come early from the job to go to take ...

MG: To take care of.

MA: To take care of the babies, of his child, and the, the woman.

- Clarifying details or information in the text (from the group's discussion of "The Sojourner")

MA: What I didn't understand was if the, the man divorced, um, I mean, divorced is the, that the man who was just living with her (was) the father of her children. I don't know if he divorced from her.

MG: Why you think so?

MA: In here they said that Ferris, Ferris invite the, the little boy to go to, to some place.

MG: No.

ID: No, but it wasn't his, the little boy. It was the boy of his girl friend.

MG: Of his girl friend in Paris.

MA: Ah, bueno! (as if to say, now it makes sense to me) I thought that it was with Elizabeth.

MG: No, no!

MA: That's why I say, how can, how can he went, go to that house.

MG: No, because that situation happened when, when he, when he went back to, to Paris.

- Translating words, phrases, and passages (from the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty")

MG: Pero (But) "beyond the barrier." What, what, what is, Qué es "beyond the barrier"? Barrier es una barrera? (the Spanish word for barrier)

ID: Mmhm. Barrier es una barrera.

- Connecting the text to personal experience (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

CA: It's something that happened with me.

MG: Yeah? With your first love?

ID: What happened to you?

CA: My first love ...

ID: Me too. It reminds me of my first. Not my first one, but I mean ...

MG: (laughing) One of them?

- Recalling feelings while reading the text (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

CA: You know, let me tell you. When I was reading the story and I was reading the part where the father was talking to both of them and then they thought he was talking to another person. He, he was imagining the, the ...

ID: The mother was there.

CA: Yeah, the mother was there. You know, that part made me, you know, a little bit sorry about him.

- Expressing like or dislike of a particular element of the text or the text as a whole (from the group's discussion of "The Sojourner")

MA: Why didn't you like the story?

MG: You didn't like it? Why?

CA: It's stupid.

MG: Why?

ID: I don't know. Maybe because I didn't understand some words. I don't know. I didn't understand what happened in there.

- Connecting the text to another text (from the group's discussion of "The Kugelmass Episode")

MA: The three chapters were old.

ID: The three characters. (correcting Maria)

MA: Yeah. And they are, they were crazy, all of them.

ID: Well, I don't know. I, I, I didn't think the second man was crazy. I don't think so.

MA: No, listen to me. What I mean ...

ID: He just, he was just a dreamer, you know.

MA: He's not crazy. Because they were crazy. They lost their minds.

Speculating about a Particular Aspect of the Text

- Motives for characters' behavior (from the group's discussion of "Eveline")

MG: He gave her a lot of attention.

MA: Yeah.

ID: Which she never had in her house.

MG: Which she never had in her house. That's it, that's it. Because her brothers and her father always was complaining about her.

ID: Mmhm.

MG: Maybe. But that doesn't mean that she love Frank.

MA: No, that doesn't mean that she love him.

MG: And maybe she realize that she didn't love him. Maybe.

CA: Yeah, maybe, you know, when she lost him, she realized that she really loved him.

MA: (simultaneously) Maybe she wanted to be alone.

MG: She realized that she, or she, she realized that she didn't love him.

CA: No, no, when she lost him she realized that she really loved him.

MG: Maybe. Or maybe she realized that was her only opportunity.

CA: Yeah, she waste the opportunity.

MG: To have, to have a better life.

- Continuation of story (from the group's discussion of "A Domestic Dilemma")

MG: Nobody, nobody knows could happen if he, he could control some, or take some decision. Nobody know what happened. If they continue together without, without alcohol.

CA: Yeah.

MG: Or if she decides to continue drinking and he, he has to take care of her child and she could be alone.

MA: Finally, he has to, to make a, a decision. He has to make a decision because they, they don't gonna be like that for, for ...

CA: The whole life.

- Conflict resolution

CA: But, you know, what do you think is the solution for, for this problem?

MG: The solution for this problem?

CA: The solution of this problem.

MA: Go to the alcoholic centers.

CA: The alcoholic center, right?

MA: Yeah.

CA: And also, you know, find the housekeeper, a woman who take care of the ...

MA: The children.

CA: The children, you know, and help her, you know.

MG: But she also need to go, she needs to go to some, to some place, to take some professional help.

CA: She needs help.

MA: But she needs some one person to give her advice.

CA: Yeah, advice. That's right.

MG: Mmhmm. (in agreement)

CA: Maybe a psychologic [psychologist].

MA and MG (simultaneously): Yeah.

- Reader's imagined role (from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

MA: Because she doesn't want the, uh, the people to think that maybe that they have something else.

CA: No.

MA: That's why I think they, she didn't say that, but that's what it means.

MG: Yeah, probably.

CA: She doesn't want nobody to know what they were talking about.

MA: Yeah, and ...

CA: Right?

MA: And also ...

ID: Yeah (starts to interrupt Maria but lets her continue)

MA: Example. If I have my boy friend, right? And you are talking to me something (she pauses to search for a word)

MG: Closely.

MA: Closely. And the person, um ...

CA: You want to be, you know ...

MA: See us together, and he's like, we're talking, they say that we have something.

MG: Mmhm. And probably, because she will marry.

ID: I mean, because everyone knew that she was supposed to get married in a week.

MG: Yeah. Uh huh.

MA: With the guy.

CA: ¿Como se dice en privado? {How do you say in private?}

MA: Private.

ID: Private.

MA: Private.

CA: You know, you want to talk in private, yeah.

MG: Mm hmm.

CA: You want nobody hear your conversation.

MA: Yeah.

MG: What you think, what do you think, Idamis?

ID: I don't know. I say, well (she says something inaudible as she laughs)

CA: Yeah. When you meet your husband in P.R. when he came here to, to ...

ID: Excuse me!

CA: From P.R., you know, you thought he would be, he would come to, to the island.

ID: (laughs loudly)

CA: (acting as Idamis might in this situation) Oh my God! I found a hero!

MA: That's the best romantic story.

ID: What are you talking about?

MG: (simultaneously with Idamis) Yeah, very romantic.

CA: (still playing the role Idamis might in a similar situation) My Rambo! (laughs)

- Author's purpose or intention (from the group's discussion of "Warm River")

CA: The purpose of the author was telling about two young lovers, right?

MA: No.

ID: I don't think that was the purpose.

CA: No?

MG: I think is to describe the many ways of love.

ID: Yeah.

CA: To describe the word love, right?

MG: MmHmm.

CA: It could be.

MG: MmHmm. The many ways of love. What is love.

MA: Or it could happen that ...

MG: How you, you, you can appreciate the love. The, the, the person that you love.

CA: Your partner.

MG: Probably. I don't know. What do you think about it?

ID: Maybe how the nature employs when you're in love.

MG: The nature?

ID: That happens. You know, the mountains, the river, that's all part of nature.

MA: Maybe the purpose is to, to, to help us, but to, to, to understand, right?

MG: Mmhmm.

MA: And to compare the, the, the love with something else. Could be the river.

MG: You could see love in everywhere.

ID: Oh yeah, that's right.

MG: And thinking about yourself, that love, like, love is a natural feeling, like a natural.

CA: Yeah.

- Significance or meaning of the title (from the group's discussion of "War")

MA: I want to talk something. Why they call the, why the, why the title "War?" (mispronouncing the word "war")

MG: War. (correcting her pronunciation)

MA: War. (repeating the correct pronunciation) If they, if they talking about the, the feelings of the parents?

MG: Ah hah. That's the reason that I think "War" means.

MA: They don't talk about ...

MG: (breaking in) Maybe, maybe, maybe I, in this case, is using in two ways, the title.

MA: Yeah.

CA: War means like fight. War, you know. If it's war there should be fighting, you know. Maybe the title is, is "War" because, you know, the, the guy was fighting with ...

MG: With his feelings.

CA: His feelings, you know.

MG: Maybe. Yeah. I thought that.

MA: Maybe that's the, that's the way that. But I was thinking and I said, so why they call, why they put the title "War" if they are talking about their, about their feelings, about their sons?

- Issues raised by the text (from the group's discussion of "A Domestic Dilemma")

CA: You know what I don't understand in this story. Let

me tell you. I don't know how come he, you know, Elizabeth's husband, let him come back home, you know, to have dinner with her, and then he left Elizabeth and Ferris alone in the room and he went to the other room with the kids. I don't, I don't understand that. If she's my wife, never mind, I'm not gonna let her go to the room with another man, you know, alone, and I'm gonna be in another room.

MG: You'll kill her. (laughs) Recuerdate que son {Remember that it's} another culture.

CA: It's another culture but ...

MG: They, t'ey are another culture and maybe he felt more sure about, about Elizabeth.

CA: No way, no way.

ID: They're here in the United States. It's here in New York.

CA: I don't think that an American's gonna do that again, you know.

MG: But they do. They do.

ID: You know why you don't do that?

CA: Why?

ID: Porque eres {because you are} machista.

CA: Not because I'm machista.

ID: Yes it is. Yes it is. Because most of the United States men, they more, they more liberal. They don't think like, like, like ...

MG: Like Hispanics.

ID: Like Latin persons do, you know. They think, they more civilized, their, their way. You know what I'm sayin'?

MG: It's, it's a cultural difference.

CA: Yeah, it's different between cultures, you know, but ...

ID: That's because our culture is too machista. You know, because American men, they, they not only think about a couple. When they get together they, they usually think too about the individual person. You know, they give to the other person that they living with. And in that space ...

CA: But they giving too much liberty, you know.

ID: I don't think it's too much liberty. I, I, I think they trust the person they are with, you know.

- Meaning of symbolism identified in the text (from the group's discussion of "The Pomegranate Trees")

MG: I think that this is a, a symbolic, symbolic? [symbol]

CA: Symbolic what?

MG: Probably. I think now, because the trees, at the end, he found the trees, uh, die, yeah, dead, die or what? (Unsure of the correct word)

CA: Yeah, dead.

MG: Los árboles estaban muertos. (The trees were dead.)

ID: Yeah, all of them died, yeah.

MG: But at the end of the whole story.

ID: Not all of them.

MG: Yeah, all of the them was. When, when, when he gave back the, the land to the ...

ID: Oh yeah, the trees were all dead. Right.

MG: All was dead. It, it was like his dream was, was dead also.

- Implied relationships between characters (from the group's discussion of "Eveline")

MG: Aunque, aunque dice, ella no dice, (Even though she doesn't say) she doesn't say that, that she love him. The story doesn't say that she love him, ¿verdad que no? (right?)

ID: No. No. Because it was an excitement for her because she never have a fellow, and she never did all the things that she did with him.

CA: But I don't really think she loved him, you know.

MG: No, I don't think so.

ID: Could be, yeah.

CA: He was something like, like first time love.

- Connection with previously read text(s) (from the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever")

MA: So let me ask a question.

MG: Mmhm.

MA: What similarities are, are between ...

MG: The three stories?

MA: No. This story and the second one that we read.

MG: Yesterday.

MA: "Warm River."

ID: The one from yesterday?

MG: Yeah, [they] have similarities.

MA: Not the same, because [they] have difference[s] also.

MG: But [there] are similarities, it's true.

MA: The similarities, I think, is that they love each other but they didn't know.

MG: Mmhm.

MA: No, they know, in, in the case that "Warm River" they know that they love each other but they didn't want to talk each other about it.

MG: During the "Warm River" he, he didn't feel sure about his feelings.

ID: Yeah, but you see that one have a good point.

MG: She feel very sure.

ID: Because they were together. (laughs) I mean, what I'm trying to say is that they were close. In this case they were separate[d] by miles, a long way.

Extracting a Message or Lesson from the Text

(from the group's discussion of "The Pomegranate Trees")

CA: I think the story is showing us a, a lesson. Like a lesson.

MG: Ah hah. Some kind of lesson.

CA: Something like lesson.

ID: Yeah?

MG: Yeah.

CA: That you have to have your, your, your feet stan, standing in the ground. You, you can't, like, you can't go out of the reality. You know what I'm trying to say?

MG: Or you have to control your imagination.

ID: You cannot let your imagination.

CA: Yeah, that's what I'm trying to say. You cannot let go your imagination. You gotta be realistic.

MA: Yeah, realistic.

MG: You could use imagination but in realistic, um, in realistic, um, time. (laughs)

MA: Be realistic.

CA: (breaking in) You could use your imagination when you want to write a poem and when you want to write a story or something but when you want to do something, with money, business, you gotta be careful.

Toward a New Model: The Need to Refine Categories

Initially, the preliminary categories appeared to encompass the many types of talk the group engaged in. The model that was generated based on these categories also seemed well conceived because it reflected two of

the most important aspects of the group's collaborative discussion. These are the ever shifting nature of the group's conversation, where the focus of conversation can change abruptly and can yield or lead to another type of talk and where the collaborative process, with its focus on the group's task, the participants' roles and use of English, moves back and forth with the group's meaning-making process. In this preliminary model, the group's collaborative and meaning-making processes were seen as interrelated yet parallel or separate in some way. However, as the categories were applied to various group sessions, it became clear that certain categories failed to reflect or capture certain utterances, particularly in the area of "Talk Related to Participants' Behavior or Roles." For example, while there were subcategories such as "Encouraging other members to participate" and "Bringing members back to task," there was no subcategory for initiating an idea. The only similar subcategory was "Establishing, clarifying, or altering the task, topic, or assignment." The subcategory "Asking a group member to repeat an idea," while needed, did not include those utterances where the group participants repeated or restated their own ideas, whether asked to by another group member or of their own accord. Furthermore, while there were the subcategories "Supplying a word or phrase to complete an idea," and "Agreeing with another member's

idea," there was no subcategory to highlight or identify utterances whereby group members disagreed with one another, or qualified another's idea or simply added another piece of information to a previously stated idea. These were clear omissions which necessitated the development of two new subcategories, the expansion of one subcategory, and the change in name of another. These new or modified subcategories are the following: (a) Initiating an idea; (b) Repeating or restating an idea or asking a member to repeat or restate an idea; (c) Extending an idea by disagreeing, contradicting, qualifying, or adding information; (d) Encouraging or inviting members to participate or develop an idea. These new and revised categories not only made it possible to describe more accurately many types of utterances but resulted in a new way of seeing the group's overall process as well as in the creation of a new model.

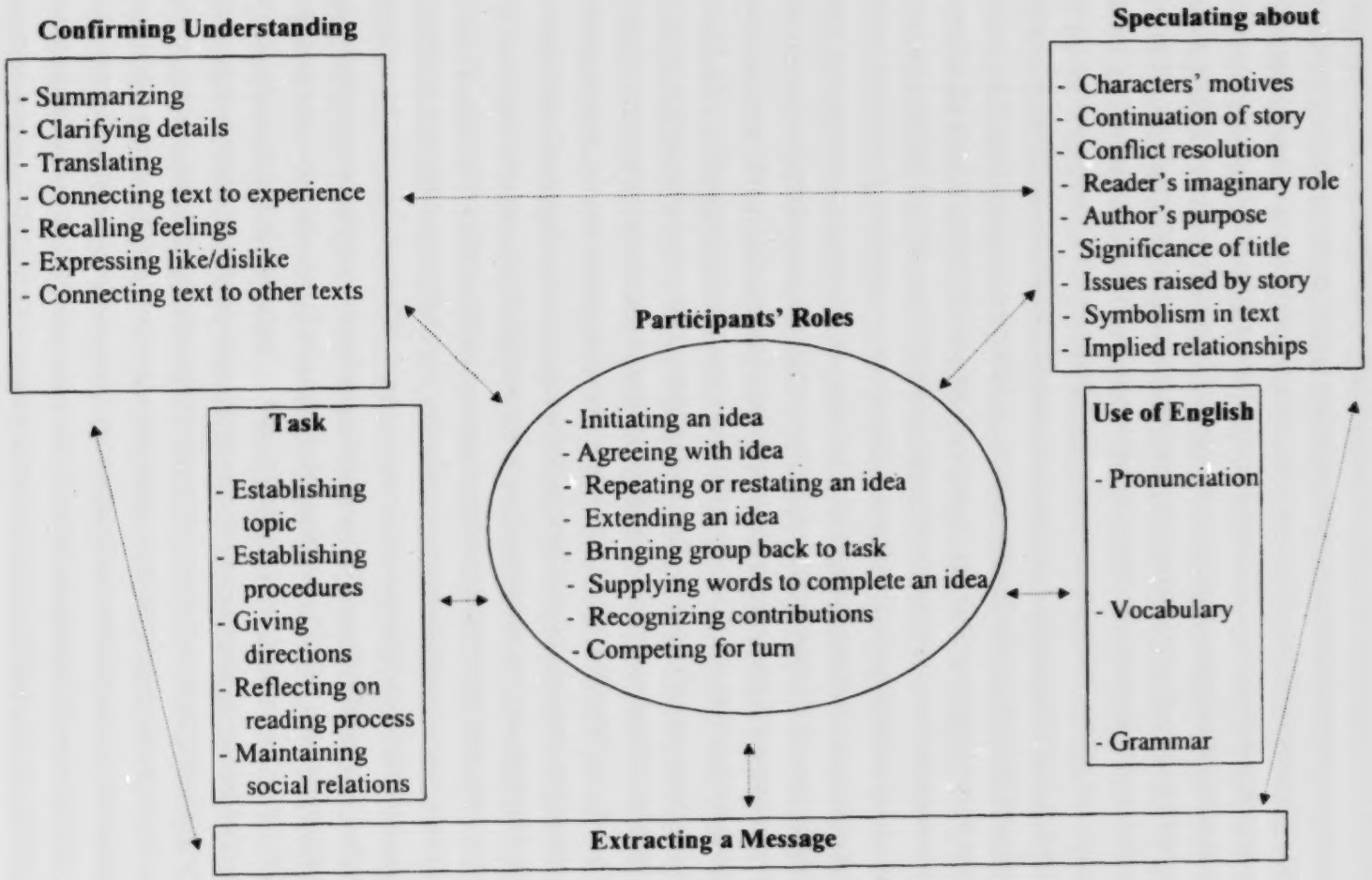
As previously stated, the group's discussion was seen as highly dynamic and fluid, that is, the group's process appeared to flow back and forth between two rather abstract processes, one collaborative and the other meaning-making. With these new categories, it became possible to conceive of the group interaction as having two component parts that functioned simultaneously virtually at all times. These new categories helped

refocus one type of talk as being more related to participants' roles than to their behavior. Consequently, every individual utterance could in turn be seen as reflecting the role of the learner within the group dynamic as well as its simultaneous function in the meaning-making process. Therefore, each utterance can be said to perform two functions at once, a collaborative-role function and a meaning-making function or a collaborative-role function and a function related to the task or the participants' use of English. In the modified model, depicted on the following page in Figure 4, the collaborative roles of the learner, not the more abstract collaborative process, are at the heart of the model.

In the following excerpt from the group's discussion of "War" by Luigi Pirandello, we see how the focus moves from speculation about the motives of a character's actions to discussion of issues raised by the text, which then necessitates some brief clarification of where the story took place. The group then returns its focus to the issue raised by the text, which provides the group with sufficient evidence to accept the initial speculation about the character's motives. This leads to further exploration of a text-related issue and results finally in an attempt to extract a "main idea" or message from the text. Typically, as the participants continue

Figure 4

Revised Model of the Meaning-Making Process of Adult ESL Learners in Collaborative Group Discussions of Short Stories in English



in their meaning-making process, their discussion includes a number of different types of utterances that characterize their individual roles within a collaborative framework, including attempts to initiate ideas, to get a turn in the conversation, to agree with or confirm understanding of another member's idea, to complete another member's idea or thought, and to correct another member's grammar.

		Participant's Role	Meaning-making/ Collaborative Function
CA:	He couldn't, you know, he couldn't answer her, you know, but then he, he realized that he was, his son was dead.	Initiating	Summarizing an idea
MG:	Ah hah. Forever. You see, he, he was really gone forever. Forever. That's the reason he began to, to, to cry, uncontrol-lable sobs, something like that.	Extending the idea	Speculating about motives for character's behavior
MA:	Uh huh.	Agreeing with	Speculation

MG:	In that moment, and, and, you see. (She reads aloud) "His face was contracted, became horribly distorted." And when he realized that he was, because maybe he was all the time, justifying his, his son's death.	Extending	Speculation
CA:	Yeah.	Agreeing with	Speculation
MG:	But in that moment he, maybe he feel free to explain, or maybe he, he couldn't control his feelings.	Extending	Speculation
CA:	Yeah, that's right. He, you know, he, he, you know, how can I say that.	Agreeing with	Speculation
MG:	Dilo en español. (Say it in Spanish.) (laughter)	Encouraging member to develop idea	Speculation

CA:	He let his feelings go out. Like you say before, you know, he was holding his feelings, you know, inside, because he didn't want to show, you know, the other people how, how he feel about that, how his son was dead.	Extending	Speculation about character's motives
MA:	I think that he did right, because ... Example, if, if I see you're crying ...	Extending the idea	Connecting text to personal experience
MG:	Mm Hm.	Agreeing with idea	
MA:	And I start to crying too, we, I, I don't ...	Extending her own idea	Connecting text to personal experience

CA:	(breaking in) But it's different. It's different because you're a woman and, you know, sometimes a man, they don't, they don't want to show, you know, they don't want to show, you know, they don't wanna show their feelings.	Contradicting the idea	Exploring or speculating about an issue raised by text
MG:	Ah hah. Because they learn. You know why? Because remember. I think, because in our society ... This was in Italy.	Extending the idea	Exploring the issue
CA:	In Italy?	Asking for restatement of idea	Clarifying detail in text
MG:	Yeah. This story is in, I think it's in Italy.	Restating her idea	Clarifying detail
CA:	Yeah, it's in Italy.	Agreeing	Clarifying detail
MG:	In Rome.	Extending idea	Clarifying detail
MA:	In Rome.	Agreeing	Clarifying detail

MG:	That's a Latin, um,	Extending idea	Returning to exploration of issue
CA:	Society.	Supplying word to complete idea	Exploring issue
MG:	Yeah, society. And we learn, you know, in our society, our society learn that man, that mens are not allowed to cry, to express their, their feelings, their sad(ness).	Extending idea	Exploring issue
CA:	You know, it, but, but, I don't think it is in every society.	Qualifying the idea	Exploring issue
MG:	No, no. I said, in, you know in our society, in Latin society.	Restating her idea	Exploring issue
CA:	Yeah, in our society the man, you know. You are a little kid, the father told you you don't cry because I'm gonna kill you.	Extending the idea	Connecting text to personal experience
MA:	Men don't cry.	Extending the idea	Connecting text to personal experience

MG:	Ah hah. And I say that that is the reason that, that all the time, all the time, to, to control his, you know. Because we teach our, our sons to control his feelings.	Extending the idea	Returning to speculation about character's motives
CA:	Their feelings. Yeah.	Initiating	Correcting grammar
MG:	That's wrong. That's wrong, because they are human and, and, like us, you know, and they need to cry, and they need to express their good and bad feelings.	Extending the idea	Exploring issue raised by text
CA:	Because we are machistas, you know.	Extending the idea	Connecting text to personal experience
MA:	Example, me.	Competing to get a turn	Connecting text to experience
CA:	We can't, we can't express our, our feelings.	Extending the idea	Connecting text to experience
MG:	Uh huh.	Agreeing	Connecting text to experience
MA:	If I, if I see ...	Continuing to compete for turn	Connecting text to experience

MG:	For me that's wrong because, we, we have to allow our sons to, you know, to express everything.	Extending the idea	Exploring issue raised by text
CA:	Yes, that's it. You know, I think that's the main idea of the story.	Recognizing a member's contribution	Extracting a message from text
MG:	Mm Hm. Let me write it.	Agreeing with idea	Extracting a message

In the following excerpt from the group's discussion of William Saroyan's "The Pomegranate Tree," the fluid and shifting nature of the participants' conversation is also in evidence, and although the focus of discussion shares similar meaning-making elements with those in the previous excerpt (e.g., summarizing parts of the text, clarifying details, speculating about the character's motives, extracting a lesson from the text), it also contains others, including connecting the text to another text and speculating on the meaning of symbolism identified in the text. At this point the participants, while still involved in the meaning-making process, not only exhibit talk in which group members compete for turns in the conversation and agree with or confirm understanding of each other's ideas, but reveal a much greater concern or need for regulating their individual

roles, behavior, and contributions:

		Participant's Role	Meaning-making/ Collaborative Function
MG:	And he thought that at the end everybody will like those fruits.	Initiating	Speculation about character's motives
ID:	Yeah, because those fruits were weird. I mean nobody knew about them.	Extending	Speculation about motives
MA:	In the whole story they talk about those trees. Those trees were really ... Don't see me like, don't look at me like that.	Initiating	Expressing feelings about another member
CA:	But I don't, I don't see the relationship between ...	Competing for turn	Speculation about motives
ID:	(interrupting) Is that what you forgot to ask?	Encouraging member to participate	Speculation about motives
MA:	(laughs)		
CA:	You know ...	Competing for turn	

ID:	Ay, Maria!	Initiating	Expressing feelings about another group member
MA:	El me hace reir, ese muchacho. {He makes me laugh.}	Extending	Expressing feelings about another member
ID:	Que? Porque tu te ries? Porque todavia no sabes? {What? Why are you laughing? Why do you still not know?}	Extending	Recognition of a participant's role
MG:	O.K. Everybody. Son las dos. {It's two o'clock} (Long pause) Ah!	Initiating	Bringing members back to task
CA:	(imitating her tone of disgust) Ah!	Initiating	Recognition of a participant's role
MG:	I think that this is a, a symbolic, symbolic? (unsure of how to say the word symbol)	Initiating an idea	Speculating about symbolism
CA:	Symbolic what?	Asking a member to restate idea	Speculating about symbolism

MG:	Probably. I think now, because the trees, at the end, he found the trees, uh, die, yeah? dead, die or what?	Extending the idea	Speculating about symbolism
CA:	Yeah, dead.	Qualifying idea	Confirming participant's grammar
MG:	Los árboles estaban muertos. {The trees were dead.}	Restating the same idea in Spanish	Speculating about symbolism
ID:	Yeah, all of them died. Yeah.	Agreeing with	Speculation
MG:	But at the end of the whole story.	Extending	Speculation about symbolism
ID:	Not all of them.	Qualifying the idea	Clarifying detail in text
MG:	Yeah, all of them was. When, when, when he gave back the, the land to the ...	Contradicting the idea	Clarifying detail in text
ID:	Oh yeah, the trees were dead. Right?	Agreeing with	Clarification
MG:	Ah hah.	Agreeing with	Clarification
ID:	Uh huh.	Agreeing with	Clarification

MG:	All was dead. It, it was like his dream was, was dead also.	Extending	Speculation about symbolism
ID:	What?	Asking member to repeat idea	Speculating about symbolism
MG:	His dream. His fantasy. I don't know how to say.	Extending	Speculation about symbolism
MA:	Maybe, wha, don't you relate this story with the first one, with this thing. Maybe that, that, that plant cannot grow up in that, in that place.	Initiating	Connecting text to another text
MG:	I said that.	Recognizing previous contribution	Summarizing part of text
MA:	But even though he know that he want to plant another kind of fruit in there.	Initiating	Speculation about character's motives
ID:	At the end?	Extending idea	Clarifying detail
MA:	No, in here.	Qualifying idea	Clarifying detail
MG:	But he didn't do it.	Qualifying idea	Clarifying detail

MA:	He said that he want to, to plant.	Extending idea	Clarifying detail
ID:	Oh, yeah.	Agreeing with	Clarification
MG:	But everything that he plant was dead.	Extending idea	Clarifying detail
MA:	Yeah.	Agreeing with	Clarification
MG:	Probably he wants, he wants to prove to himself that, that his imagination was real.	Initiating	Speculation about character's motives
MA:	This is another similarity between this and the first one, because the man, um, in the first one, in the first story, the man was ... (Pause)	Initiating idea	Connecting text to another text
CA:	Mira, mira, mira, mira! {Look, look, look, look!}	Competing for turn	Speculation
MA:	It's something like, like he was crazy.	Extending	Speculation about character's motives

MG:	Or he was trying to prove to himself that his imagination was real.	Extending	Speculation about character's motives
CA:	But look.	Competing for turn	Speculation
ID:	What do you mean that his imagination was real?	Asking member to elaborate	Speculation about character's motives
CA:	It was real. Because look, look over here. (Reads aloud from text) "About three years later he and I drove out to the land and walked to the pomegranate orchard. All the trees were dead."	Extending idea	Clarifying detail
ID:	It was real.	Agreeing with	Clarification
MG:	Everything was dead.	Restating idea	Clarification
ID:	Yeah, that was real.	Agreeing with	Clarification

MG:	No, his, his imagination. He knew he was using his imagination. But probably ... Que el no aceptaba {He didn't accept} that he was wrong, that his desire was in a wrong way.	Extending	Speculation about character's motives
ID:	Yeah, but because of that, I mean, you know, he didn't let, he, he, he just want ... What happened over here is that he let his imagination control him.	Extending	Speculation about character's motives
MG:	Mmhm. Mmhm.	Agreeing with	Speculation
ID:	So if the imagination controls yourself, you cannot, you can, you cannot see anyway, you cannot see if you are wrong or right.	Initiating	Extracting a message from text

MG:	Uh huh. Uh huh. The only way that you see, the only one that you want.	Extending	Extracting a message
ID:	Yeah. You only see the way that you, that your imagination want you to see.	Extending	Extracting a message
MG:	Mmhm. A good lesson.	Recognizing a member's contribution	Extracting a message
ID:	Right?	Agreeing with idea	Extracting a message
MG:	That's a good lesson. O.K. Dímelo de nuevo. {Tell it to me again.}	Restating idea	Extracting a message

Interrater Reliability

The categories described above were tested by two English educators who have each had more than 25 years of experience teaching English composition and literature to native and nonnative speakers of English. The raters each have doctorates in the field, one in College Teaching of English and the other in English Language and Literature. After a brief training session to familiarize the raters with the categories used in this study, each rater was given an extended segment of

a transcript of one of the group's discussion sessions. The rate of agreement for coding each utterance or turn in the conversation was 81.6% and 85.3% respectively.

One common area of disagreement had to do with whether to categorize a statement as "initiating an idea" or "extending an idea." In several instances the raters coded an utterance as "initiating an idea" when the author of this study coded it as "extending an idea." This discrepancy may have been due to two factors. One factor is that the raters failed to notice that some ideas had been broached earlier in the conversation and that the participants were returning to previously articulated thoughts. This discrepancy serves to highlight the recursive nature of the participants' talk, which is also one of its most distinguishing features. The raters categorized the utterance as "initiating an idea" because they discerned a change in the focus of the conversation, not realizing that the participants had already attempted to talk about that particular aspect of the text. In addition, there were at least two instances where the participants returned to an issue they discussed in a segment of the conversation that did not appear in the transcript given to the raters, who had no way of knowing that particular point or issue had been discussed.

Another source of difference between the raters and

this researcher had to do with how the categories "summarizing" and "clarifying details" were applied. The raters claimed they sometimes found it difficult to categorize certain utterances as one or the other. Both raters stated that they would have liked to have had more time to become familiar with all the categories before attempting to employ them in such a specific way; one stated that she would have liked to have read the story the students were discussing before the training session occurred.

CHAPTER V

PARTICIPANT ROLES AND RESPONSES TO TWO TYPES OF TEXTS

To gain a more complete profile of the group's meaning-making and collaborative processes, an in-depth analysis was conducted of two complete 80-minute group discussion sessions, one in which the group appeared to have a general overall understanding of the text and another in which the group clearly exhibited difficulty in understanding many details of the text as well as the story as a whole. The purpose for choosing two different types of discussions was to examine whether or not there were discernible differences in the ways in which students made meaning of each type of text and the nature of the group's collaborative process in each type of situation. Moreover, by applying the specific categories that emerged out of the study, a profile of each reader in the group and the roles he or she played in the group's collaborative process might also be explored.

Easily-Understood Text vs. Difficult-to-Understand Text

For the first type of session, i.e., a text that appeared to have been relatively easily understood by

the group, the group's discussion of "Warm River" by Erskine Caldwell was selected. For the second type, a text whose overall meaning was problematic, the researcher chose the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." A table providing a breakdown by type of utterance for each story is included in Table 1.

In comparing the responses of the group to the two texts, a number of clear distinctions can be made. In the discussion of "Warm River," 42.8% of the total number of utterances by the group (860) were devoted to confirming understanding of the text as opposed to 67.5% in the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Also, the types of meaning-confirming utterances were different. In the more accessible text, "Warm River," a higher percentage of meaning-confirming utterances occurred in such subcategories as connecting the text to personal experience (5.8%), recalling feelings or understanding while reading the text (7.9%), and expressing liking or disliking a particular element of the text or the text as a whole (14.8%). In the more problematic text, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the percentage of these subcategories within the broader category of meaning-making utterances was 2.1%, 1.9%, and 2.2%, respectively. It is clear that students were able to make more personal connections and express more personal involvement with the more accessible text.

Table 1

Comparison by Type of Utterance of the Group's Responses to the Short Stories "Warm River" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

TYPE OF UTTERANCE	WARM RIVER		WALTER MITTY		TOTALS FOR BOTH STORIES	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
TASK						
Establishing topic	93	10.8%	9	0.9%	102	5.5%
Establishing procedures	40	4.7%	97	9.7%	137	7.4%
Giving directions	12	1.4%	50	5.0%	62	3.3%
Reading process	12	1.4%	16	1.6%	28	1.5%
Social relations	15	1.7%	2	0.2%	17	0.9%
TOTALS	172	20.0%	174	17.4%	346	18.6%
USE OF ENGLISH						
Pronunciation	12	1.4%	25	2.5%	37	2.0%
Vocabulary	17	2.0%	11	1.1%	28	1.5%
Grammar	17	2.0%	0	0.0%	17	0.9%
TOTALS	46	5.3%	36	3.6%	82	4.4%
CONFIRMING UNDERSTANDING						
Summarizing	23	2.7%	44	4.4%	67	3.6%
Clarifying details	66	7.7%	467	46.6%	533	28.6%
Translating	0	0.0%	103	10.3%	103	5.5%
Connecting to experience	50	5.8%	21	2.1%	71	3.8%
Recalling feelings	68	7.9%	19	1.9%	87	4.7%
Expressing like/dislike	127	14.8%	22	2.2%	149	8.0%
Connecting to other texts	34	4.0%	0	0.0%	34	1.8%
TOTALS	368	42.8%	676	67.5%	1044	56.1%
SPECULATING						
Characters' motives	65	7.6%	68	6.8%	133	7.1%
Continuation of story	36	4.2%	2	0.2%	38	2.0%
Conflict resolution	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Reader's imagined role	6	0.7%	0	0.0%	6	0.3%
Author's purpose	53	6.2%	0	0.0%	53	2.8%
Significance of title	14	1.6%	44	4.4%	58	3.1%
Issues raised by text	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Symbolism	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Implied relationships	3	0.3%	2	0.2%	5	0.3%
TOTALS	178	20.7%	116	11.6%	294	15.8%
EXTRACTING MESSAGE	96	11.2%	0	0.0%	96	5.2%
GRAND TOTALS	860	100%	1002	100%	1862	100%

In addition, there was no significant difference in the percentage of utterances summarizing the text in the two sessions. In the group's discussion of "Warm River" 2.7% were of this type while in the discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" it was 4.4%. However, the category that showed a marked difference was that of clarifying details or information in the text, where 7.7% of the total utterances were of this type as compared to 46.6% in the hard-to-understand text.

Another category that showed a clear difference was that of speculating about or exploring a particular aspect of the text. Here the percentage was 20.7% for "Warm River" and 11.6% for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." However, the types of subcategories of speculative utterances were similar in only one area, that of speculating about motives for a character's behavior: 7.6% of the total utterances in the session on "Warm River" were of this kind and 6.8% for the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." For other subcategories of speculation, however, there were areas of contrast. For example, for "Warm River" 4.2% of the total utterances were devoted to speculation about what will happen after the story ends. For "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" there were only two utterances (0.2%) in this subcategory, highlighting again the fact that students were primarily concerned

with understanding more basic details and information in the text and thus found it more difficult to make personal connections.

It is not surprising then that students were never able to extract any messages or lessons from "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty;" there were zero utterances for this category while for "Warm River" 11.2% of the group's total utterances were in this category. In fact, the group's inability to see any overall message in "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" can be seen in the final portion of the discussion in which participants express doubt and confusion about their own understanding and share ways they will use to try and understand the story better. These include rereading the story "from the beginning, step by step," finding "someone who knows very well English who could help us to try to understand better the situation," reading the text "with a person we can discuss at the same time," writing down the things "we don't understand," and returning to the text to find "good evidence to support our point of view." The concern with finding ways to understand "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" is reflected in the data, where 9.7% of the total utterances are related to the subcategory of establishing or refining procedures to carry out the task, as compared to 4.7% for "Warm River."

There are other basic differences with respect to the group's collaborative process for the two texts. Much more attention was given to establishing, clarifying, or altering the topic or task for "Warm River," where 10.8% of the total utterances were of this type, than for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," where the figure was only 0.9%. This disparity is in part attributed to the fact that "Warm River" was one of the texts discussed early in the semester when the participants were still getting used to the collaborative process while "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" was read in the middle of the term. By contrast, there was a higher frequency of utterances related to the subcategory of giving or asking for directions to locate a specific word, phrase, or passage in the text for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," 5.0% of the total utterances, than for "Warm River," for which the percentage was only 1.4%. This may largely reflect the way in which the participants moved their attention from one difficult passage to another as they attempted to construct an understanding of the text and reconcile seemingly contradictory explanations and interpretations of what they thought was occurring in the text. As a participant located an unfamiliar word, phrase, or sentence or attempted to identify a passage that might clarify, support, or even refute another member's idea,

he or she would attempt to focus everyone else's attention on the pertinent place in the text.

Another area of the collaborative process that showed considerable differences had to do with talk related to participant's use of English. Of the total utterances within this category for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," 72.2% were attempts to confirm or correct participants' pronunciation compared to 22.4% for "Warm River." This may be explained by the fact that "Walter Mitty" had many more words that the participants found difficult to pronounce; many times a participant would stumble over a word's pronunciation and another member would attempt to assist the person. This was much less the case in "Warm River," where most attempts to confirm or correct a participant's pronunciation occurred when the person was speaking about the text rather than attempting to say a word contained directly in the text.

Furthermore, there were a total of 17 attempts to confirm or correct a participant's use of grammar in the session on "Warm River," whereas there were no instances of this during the discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." A possible explanation for this is that in the former story, where the group's understanding was much greater and, thus, generated a higher level of comfort among the participants, the group paid more

attention to form than to content; the members may have felt less encumbered by the urgency to make sense of the text and were able to focus more on the accuracy of each other's talk. By contrast, "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" clearly elicited more uncertainty among the participants, which in turn created a greater sense of urgency to understand the text; this may have resulted in more attention paid to what each member said rather than to how the person said it.

A Comparison of Participant Roles in the Group's Collaborative Discussion of Two Types of Texts

There are also certain differences in the group's discussion of the two texts with respect to the types of participant roles (See Table 2). One of the greatest differences has to do with the number of utterances in the two sessions that involved extending of ideas. In the group's discussion of "Warm River" 29.8% of the total utterances involved the extending of ideas whereas in the group's discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" 42.6% of all utterances were of this type. This disparity is even greater when one looks at the group's attempts to confirm understanding of the text, where attempts to extend the group's confirmation of its understanding of "Warm River" were 13.8% of the total utterances as compared to 32.5% for "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Here again, this difference reflects the

Table 2

Comparison of Type of Roles in the Collaborative Group Discussion of the Short Stories "Warm River" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

	TASK			USE OF ENGLISH			CONFIRMING UNDERSTANDING			SPECULATING			EXTRACTING A MESSAGE			GRAND TOTAL		
	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total	Warm River	Walter Mitty	Total
INITIATING	40	58	98	15	14	29	43	75	118	21	11	32	10	0	10	130	158	288
	4.7%	5.8%	5.3%	1.7%	1.4%	1.6%	5.0%	7.5%	6.3%	2.4%	1.1%	1.7%	1.2%	0%	0.5%	15.1%	15.0%	15.5%
AGREEING	25	26	51	7	3	10	91	131	222	50	37	87	41	0	41	214	197	411
	2.9%	2.6%	2.7%	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%	10.6%	13.1%	11.9%	5.8%	3.7%	4.7%	4.8%	0%	2.2%	25.0%	19.8%	22.1%
REPEATING	28	20	48	18	15	33	34	74	108	7	9	16	1	0	1	88	118	206
	3.3%	2.0%	2.6%	2.1%	1.5%	1.8%	4.0%	7.4%	5.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0.1%	0%	0.1%	10.2%	11.8%	11.1%
EXTENDING	39	52	91	6	4	10	119	326	445	67	45	112	25	0	25	256	427	683
	4.5%	5.2%	4.9%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	13.8%	32.5%	23.9%	7.8%	4.5%	6.0%	2.9%	0%	1.3%	29.8%	42.6%	36.7%
INVITING	6	1	7	0	0	0	32	10	42	7	1	8	2	0	2	47	12	59
	0.7%	0.1%	0.4%	0%	0%	0%	3.7%	1.0%	2.3%	0.8%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0%	0.1%	5.5%	1.2%	3.2%
BRINGING BACK TO TASK	10	0	10	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	10
	1.2%	0%	0.5%	0%	0%	0%	0.1%	0%	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.2%	0%	0.5%
SUPPLYING A WORD	1	0	1	0	0	0	10	9	19	6	4	10	0	0	0	17	13	30
	0.1%	0%	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0%	0%	0%	2.0%	1.3%	1.6%
RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTION	20	13	33	0	0	0	12	17	29	11	1	12	9	0	9	52	31	83
	2.3%	1.3%		0%	0%	0%	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%	1.3%	0.1%	0.6%	1.0%	0%	0.5%	6.0%	3.1%	4.5%
COMPETING FOR TURN	3	4	7	0	0	0	26	34	60	9	8	17	8	0	8	46	46	92
	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0%	0%	0%	3.0%	3.4%	3.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%	0%	0.4%	5.3%	4.6%	4.9%
TOTALS	172	174	346	46	36	82	368	676	1044	178	116	294	96	0	96	860	1002	1862
	20%	17.4%	18.6%	5.3%	3.6%	4.4%	42.8%	67.5%	56.1%	20.7%	11.6%	15.8%	11.2%	0%	5.2%	100%	100%	100%

participants' difficulty in understanding the latter text, which prompted the group to go over specific points that were not clear to them in a continually recursive fashion.

Other areas in which the overall roles of the group differed included the following categories: inviting or encouraging a group member to participate; bringing a group member back to task; recognizing another member's contribution. There were more instances of each category in the group's discussion of "Warm River" than there were in the discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." For the three aforementioned categories the difference in number of total utterances is, respectively, 47 (5.5%) to 12 (1.2%), 10 (1.2%) to 0 (0%), 52 (6.0%) to 31 (3.1%).

One possible explanation for the discrepancy in two of the categories, bringing a group member back to task and recognizing another member's contribution, probably has to do with the behavior of Carlos, the only male member in the group, who was perceived by his peers to have been engaging in off-task behavior. At various points in the session, they warned him about tampering with the recording device, ("You're not going to play with it today, okay?," "We're gonna tie up your hands.") and chastised him for his behavior ("Come over here. What happened to you?," "But you could be a kid," "We

have to do something.") Yet the group appeared to be quite solicitous of him and members often made a special effort to acknowledge his contributions to the group ("We have to write that down.," "He got that one right.," "And Carlos say why. I understand your words. You said it right. Carlos said it could be right.") and to invite him to participate ("You said the purpose of the author ...," "O.K., continue Carlos.," "O.K. The other question, Carlos. Carlos, the other question. Or you are looking for something special in the story?").

Another possible explanation for this discrepancy may be related to the disparity in the participants' understanding of the two texts. There is a perceptible difference in the tone of the group's utterances. The discussion of "Warm River" appears to proceed at a more leisurely pace as the participants share their responses in a calmer and more comfortable way, save for the frustration and growing impatience with Carlos' behavior. The following exchange shows how, at various points in the discussion, Carlos moves back and forth in his treatment of Maria, the only single woman in the group who also is Carlos' age, from a deprecating, almost hostile attitude to one that clearly has flirtatious overtones:

MA: Because I ... (She giggles.)

MG: She said that the first time she read it she got

problems because she ...

MA: Didn't understand.

MG: Didn't understand.

CA: Oh. You should call me. (He laughs.)

MA: I don't know your phone number.

MG: But the second time ...

CA: I give you.

MG: She understands.

MA: You always call me. (She laughs.)

MG: O.K. The other, Carlos. (bringing Maria and Carlos back to task)

With "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," doubt, frustration and uncertainty are discernible features of the participants' talk, resulting in a sense of urgency to make meaning of the text and repeated attempts by the group to advance explanations of what they had read but did not clearly comprehend. As was the case with the group's more limited focus on the correct form or grammar with which group members expressed themselves as opposed to the content of what they said, there was less concern or need by the group to regulate its behavior and acknowledge individual roles and more attention was paid to achieving a consensus of understanding of the text's meaning.

Participation of Individual Group Members

Another interesting comparison has to do with the

level of participation by the four group members (See Table 3). For "Warm River," the proportionate number of utterances in the session is relatively uniform for Maria (21.9%), Carlos (26.9%), Idamis (24.0%), and Margarita (27.3%). In the discussion on "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," Maria's and Carlos' level of participation each declines to 14.4% and 17.8% respectively. Idamis' level of participation increases to 29.3% while Margarita's exhibits the greatest change, an increase of 11.3% for an overall share of 38.6% of the group's total utterances.

An explanation for this change in participation may be related to three important interrelated factors: oral proficiency, reading skill, and role played by each individual within the group. For example, Maria was clearly the weakest reader of the four and had the greatest difficulty expressing herself in English. She spoke English rather haltingly and often struggled to complete her thoughts. The data for the two sessions indicate that she had by far the greatest number of utterances, 42 out of 92 (45.7%), that were classified as attempts to get or maintain a turn in the conversation (See Table 4). By contrast, Idamis, the most fluent speaker of English in the group, had the fewest utterances (8) of this type. Her facility in English made it more likely for her to get her ideas

Table 3

Comparison by Type of Utterance of Individual Participant's Responses to the Short Stories "Warm River" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

		WARM RIVER					WALTER MITTY					BOTH STORIES COMBINED				
		Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Group Totals	Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Group Totals	Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Group Totals
TASK	n	47	36	59	30	172	78	33	34	29	174	125	69	93	59	346
	%	5.5%	4.2%	6.9%	3.5%	20.0%	7.8%	3.3%	3.4%	2.9%	17.4%	6.7%	3.7%	5.0%	3.2%	18.6%
USE OF ENGLISH	n	9	13	15	9	46	9	17	6	4	36	18	30	21	13	82
	%	1.0%	1.5%	1.7%	1.0%	5.3%	0.9%	1.7%	0.6%	0.4%	3.6%	1.0%	1.6%	1.1%	0.7%	4.4%
CONFIRMING UNDERSTANDING	n	94	77	95	102	368	254	209	123	90	676	348	286	218	192	1044
	%	10.9%	9.0%	11.0%	11.9%	42.8%	25.3%	20.9%	12.3%	9.0%	67.5%	18.7%	15.4%	11.7%	10.3%	56.1%
SPECULATING	n	56	50	32	40	178	46	34	15	21	116	102	84	47	61	294
	%	6.5%	5.9%	3.7%	4.7%	20.7%	4.6%	3.4%	1.5%	2.1%	11.6%	5.5%	4.5%	2.5%	3.3%	15.8%
EXTRACTING A MESSAGE	n	29	30	30	7	96	0	0	0	0	0	29	30	30	7	96
	%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	0.8%	11.3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1.6%	1.6%	1.6%	0.4%	5.2%
TOTALS	N	235	206	231	188	860	387	293	178	144	1002	622	499	409	332	1862
	%	27.3%	24.0%	26.9%	21.9%	100%	38.6%	29.2%	17.8%	14.4%	100%	33.4%	26.8%	22.0%	17.8%	100%

heard and less likely to be interrupted by others, since she had less difficulty finding the necessary words to communicate her ideas.

Responses of Individual Participants

A close examination of the data for these two sessions reveals characteristics of the response style and reading skill of all four participants in the study that are also reflected in the transcripts of other discussion sessions. A more detailed profile of each participant's response style and role within the group is presented below. In addition, attention is also given to some of the perceived advantages and impediments the collaborative context may hold for each member of the group.

As previously mentioned, Maria was the weakest member of the group in terms of her fluency and reading skill in English. This is borne out by factors other than the percentage of her utterances for the two sessions, where her participation declined in the group's discussion of the more difficult text. Her contributions to the group's meaning-making process tend to be limited to certain elements, most of which involve confirming understanding of the text. These are: summarizing parts of or the whole text, clarifying details or information in the text, recalling feelings or understanding while reading the text, and expressing

like or dislike about a particular element of the text or the text as a whole. However, Maria's ability or willingness to speculate about or explore a particular aspect of the text is comparatively low. Of the group's 294 total speculative utterances for the two sessions, Maria made 61 (20.7%) of them (See Table 3). Furthermore, she made only a total of seven utterances in either of the two sessions that could be categorized as extracting a message or lesson from the text, one of the higher order reading skills.

Maria's general understanding of the text clearly improved as a result of her participation in the group discussions. She consistently exhibited problems with her literal comprehension of a story and often misconstrued or misunderstood certain details that would lead to erroneous interpretations of the text as a whole. In most instances, however, she was able to clarify her misunderstandings in a variety of ways. Sometimes she would attempt to summarize part of a text and would have her version of events corrected by another group member.

Other times, while listening to other members relate their understanding of a text, she would interrupt when a summary statement or explanation was given that did not correspond to her understanding. On other occasions, she would simply ask the group to

clarify a doubt that she had while at other times she would listen to the group explain the text and then seek to confirm her understanding of what she heard. Utilizing these various strategies, Maria's understanding of a text generally improved as a result of having participated in the small-group discussion in a way that it might not have, had the discussion been led by a teacher with an entire class or had she read the texts on her own.

Despite her comprehension problems, Maria attempted on several occasions to make connections among the texts, even texts that were read earlier in the semester. While she had difficulty articulating these connections and developing them in any depth, these tentative efforts to seek such connections sometimes led the group to explore important textual elements, such as the relationship between characters, the motives for characters' actions, and the relationship between a given text and a general theme. Although she appeared to have the most difficulty gaining and maintaining her turn in the conversation, she consistently made an effort to do so and was willing to initiate discussion on matters that concerned her. While her peers recognized her difficulty in understanding the text and in expressing herself, they generally attempted to assist her in clarifying her ideas and to direct their

attention to issues that she raised.

Carlos, the only male in the group, was the group member most likely to connect a text to personal experience. He was generally the first to point out how a text reminded him of something he once did or heard about and to discuss ways in which the text was similar or dissimilar to the society or culture he is from. He was also the group member who engaged in what W. Taylor (1988) has termed enactment, a subcategory of spectator-role response to a text in which a participant "takes on speech or action related to experiences in the literature under discussions." (p. 137) In several of the discussion sessions, Carlos speaks in the manner or tone of voice that he imagines a character of the text might. His tendency to do this also reflects Carlos' playful nature, a trait that sometimes presented a problem when his joking and clowning were perceived by others as disruptive and preventing the group from carrying out their task.

However, Carlos could also be very task oriented and he would often try to move the discussion along when he felt something had already been adequately dealt with or was not particularly important to spend time on. He often appeared to want the group to hurry up the discussion, as if the faster they completed the discussion, the sooner he would be free from the demands

that working collaboratively involved.

In the discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," the story that the group appeared to find the most difficult, in which his utterances were only 17.8% of the group's total, Carlos repeatedly expressed his frustration. At times his frustration took on an air of resignation, as if no amount of work by the group would lead to some sense of understanding. Yet Carlos found ways to contribute; he would look up problematic vocabulary from the text in an all-English dictionary and would attempt to read aloud what he thought was the appropriate entry. This would lead the group to test out whether or not the definition fit the context of the story, which in most cases it did. Despite his "bad boy" image in the group, Carlos was an active participant and his opinion, when it was not perceived to be joking or silly, was welcomed by the other group members.

Idamis was the most orally fluent member of the group. Her vocabulary and knowledge of idiomatic English enabled her to explain words and expressions that were unfamiliar to other group members. Despite her fluency, however, she often asked basic questions about aspects of the text that revealed a lack of comprehension on her part. She exhibited a low tolerance for ambiguity and for lack of closure. For

example, in the group's discussion of "Long Walk to Forever," she was dismayed by her perception that the story lacked a clear resolution or ending. She states directly at one point: "But that's why I didn't like the story. It doesn't say it in the story, so we have to imagine what happened." In this particular instance, Idamis is also upset by not knowing if one of the characters will be told that his fiancee is leaving him for another man, as shown in the following exchange:

ID: O.K. Everything is fine when she decided what she have to do when she was sure, when she make a choice of beautiful. Everything is beautiful, but I don't like what gonna happen, with, I mean, not what gonna happen. I don't like not to know what gonna happen with the other guy.

MG: (laughs)

ID: That's what I don't like.

MG: The only thing you want to know is what happen like this. (laughs)

MA: Because ...

ID: Yeah, I mean, you know, why he didn't mention ...

MA: Because, maybe, she, when they was, when they were, um,hugging (unsure of pronunciation), each other.

ID: Hugging each other. (confirming correct pronunciation)

MA: Hugging each other.

MG: Mm Hm.

MA: Can they, they, her boy friend see what happening.

ID: Yeah, he shoulda come and found them together, right?

MA: Yeah. (laughs) We don't know that.

ID: Then he coulda got an explanation, right?

MG: That, that, that is the decision of the reader. The author finish in that area and you decide what will happen. This, this is a, a, a technique ...

MA: So we have to finish this.

MG: (simultaneously) that the writer has. Also, in pictures. You can see that in pictures. I don't know what will happen later.

MA: We have to do it. Let's finish it.

MG: To use your mind and analyze the situation, you know.

MA: Yeah.

MG: This is common in movies and in TV and in different other stories ... You have a choice.

ID: But I don't want to have a choice. What I'm trying to say is a negative thing. That's it.

MG: If you don't want to have a choice, that's your problem. (laughs)

CA: (laughs loudly)

MA: (trying to calm Idamis) I agree with you. I agree with you.

ID: You are agree with me? No, you don't.

MA: Yes, I do.

ID: No, you don't.

MA: I do.

ID: You agreed with me when you told that it's a wrong thing. That's it. It was wrong, right?

MA: Yeah.

ID: So that's what I'm trying to say. I don't want to make a choice or anything, you know.

CA: All right. (trying to quell the argument)

ID: So that's, that's it.

MG: Don't do a choice.

The above excerpt, in addition to showing Idamis upset with the character's choice and with not knowing its consequences, is a good demonstration of how different group members intervened to mediate disputes and how relationships and roles shifted within one particular session and from one session to the next. For example, the relationship between Idamis and Margarita, so combative in this particular instance, could be intensely cooperative, as was the case in the discussion of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," in which these two participants combined to make 70.8% of the total speculative utterances about the text, or in the case of "Warm River," where together they generated 75% of the utterances related to extracting a message or

lesson from the text.

The fourth and final member of the group, Margarita, was probably the most insightful reader and, if one had to choose, perhaps its leader. She took the group's work very seriously, consistently endeavored to keep the group on task, and was generally supportive of other members' contributions. These roles can be observed in the data for the two sessions "Warm River" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Margarita made 125 of 346 (36.1%) of all task-related utterances (See Table 3), 99 of the 288 utterances (34.4%) that initiated an idea (See Table 4), 6 of the 10 utterances (60%) to bring a group member back to task, 28 of the 59 utterances (47.5%) to invite or encourage another member to participate or develop an idea, and 151 of the 411 utterances (47.9%) related to agreeing with or confirming understanding of another member's idea. In addition, she made 34.7% (102 of 294) of the group's total speculative utterances for these two stories (See Table 3). She was the one reader throughout the sessions who was most likely to see and be able to explain a symbolic element in a text, articulate the similarities and differences among related texts, to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, and to seek to clarify something in a text with the greatest determination. However, even though other group

Table 4

Comparison of Individual Participant's Roles in the Collaborative Group Discussion of the Short Stories "Warm River" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"

	WARM RIVER					WALTER MITTY					BOTH STORIES COMBINED				
	Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Totals	Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Totals	Margarita	Idamis	Carlos	Maria	Totals
INITIATING	34 4.0%	30 3.5%	47 5.5%	19 2.2%	130 15.5%	65 6.5%	44 4.4%	29 2.9%	20 2.0%	158 15.8%	99 5.3%	74 4.0%	76 4.1%	39 2.1%	288 15.5%
AGREEING	73 8.5%	55 6.4%	48 5.6%	38 4.4%	214 24.9%	78 7.8%	58 5.8%	37 3.7%	24 2.4%	197 19.7%	151 8.1%	113 6.1%	85 4.6%	62 3.3%	411 22.1%
REPEATING	17 2.0%	25 2.9%	25 2.9%	21 2.4%	88 10.2%	34 3.40%	50 5.0%	18 1.80%	16 1.6%	118 11.8%	51 2.7%	75 4.0%	43 2.3%	37 2.0%	206 11.1%
EXTENDING	61 7.1%	59 6.9%	74 8.6%	62 7.2%	256 29.8%	173 17.3%	120 12%	76 7.6%	58 5.8%	427 42.6%	234 12.6%	179 9.6%	150 8.1%	120 6.4%	683 36.7%
INVITING	18 2.1%	9 1.0%	10 1.2%	10 1.2%	47 5.5%	10 1.0%	2 0.2%	0 0%	0 0%	12 1.2%	28 1.5%	11 0.6%	10 0.5%	10 0.5%	59 3.2%
BRINGING BACK TO TASK	6 0.7%	1 0.1%	2 0.2%	1 0.1%	10 1.2%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6 0.3%	1 0.1%	2 0.1%	1 0.1%	10 0.5%
SUPPLYING A WORD	4 0.5	8 0.9	1 0.1	4 0.5	17 2.0	6 0.6	5 0.5	1 0.10%	1 0.1%	13 1.3%	10 0.5%	13 0.7%	2 0.1%	5 0.3%	30 1.6%
RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTION	12 1.4%	17 2.0%	14 1.6%	9 1.0%	52 6.0%	9 0.9%	8 0.8%	7 0.7%	7 0.7%	31 3.1%	21 1.1%	25 1.3%	21 1.1%	16 0.9%	83 4.5%
COMPETING FOR A TURN	10 1.2%	2 0.2%	10 1.2%	24 2.8%	46 5.3%	12 1.2%	6 0.6%	10 1.0%	18 1.8%	46 4.6%	22 1.2%	8 0.4%	20 1.1%	42 2.3%	92 4.9%
TOTALS	235 27.3%	206 24.0%	231 26.9%	188 21.9%	860 100%	387 38.6%	293 29.3%	178 17.8%	144 14.4%	1002 100%	622 33.4%	499 26.8%	409 22%	332 17.8%	1862 100%

members seemed to hold her opinion in high regard, they did not blindly accept her ideas and interpretations but were willing to challenge and even dispute her judgments when they deemed it necessary.

As the data suggest, the group's collaborative and meaning-making processes are inextricably linked. Each participant in the group can be said to have his or her own particular response style and to play a particular role within the group. However, the focus of response is constantly shifting and individual roles vary so that any one member may take on a particular role at any given time. While one may be able to anticipate the types of response in a discussion session, the frequency of a particular type of utterance appears to vary, based on a number of interrelated factors. These include the difficulty of the text, the participants' ability to connect the text to personal experience, the willingness and ability of group members to speculate on various aspects of the text, and their success in identifying sufficient evidence to confirm their ideas in order to reach a consensus of understanding and interpretation.

CHAPTER VI

HYPOTHESES, DISCUSSION OF HYPOTHESES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents hypotheses that were generated from the analysis of the data, a discussion relating the findings of this study to current theoretical and pedagogical concerns, and recommendations and implications for research and teaching.

Hypotheses

This study generated hypotheses about the nature of adult ESL learners' oral responses to short stories in English in collaborative group discussions. These hypotheses are classified under four general rubrics: (a) The focus of the oral responses; (b) how collaborative group discussion influences the content of individual group member's responses; (c) the factors that facilitate oral responses within a collaborative group context, and (d) the factors that impede oral responses within a collaborative group context.

The Focus of Oral Responses by Adult ESL Learners to Short Stories in English

1. Adult ESL learners initially tend to focus their oral responses on confirming their understanding of a text.
2. Adult ESL learners utilize a variety of ways to confirm their understanding, including summarizing parts of or the whole text, clarifying details or information in the text, translating words, phrases and passages in the text, connecting the text to personal experience, recalling feelings or understanding while reading the text, expressing like or dislike about a particular element of the text or the text as a whole, and connecting the text to another text.
3. Adult ESL learners speculate on a broad range of textual elements, including motives for characters' behavior, what will happen after the story ends, how a problem or conflict might have been resolved, what the reader would do if he/she were in the character's situation, the author's purpose or intention, the significance or meaning of a story's title, issues raised by the text, meaning of symbolism identified in the text, implied relationships between characters, and connections with other texts.
4. Adult ESL learners speculate on various elements of a text once they have confirmed their understanding(s) of the text to their own satisfaction.
5. Adult ESL learners extract messages and lessons from a text only after they believe they have understood a

text.

6. When responding to a more difficult text, adult ESL students appear to focus more on the content than on the grammatical correctness of each other's utterances.

How Collaborative Group Discussion Influences the Content of Adult ESL Learners' Oral Responses

1. Adult ESL learners confirm their understanding, speculate about or explore a particular aspect of a text, and extract a message or messages from the text when they participate in collaborative group discussions about texts they have read outside of class.

2. Adult ESL learners generate, refine and develop their oral responses to short stories in English when given immediate feedback to their utterances by their peers.

3. Adult ESL learners engage in talk that promotes collaboration and the completion of a collaborative task when afforded the opportunity to establish, clarify or alter the task, establish or refine procedures to carry out the task, give or ask for directions to locate specific words, phrases or passages in the text, and share procedures or strategies about the reading process.

4. Adult ESL learners take on a variety of roles that can lead to successful collaboration, including bringing group members back to task, encouraging or inviting another member to participate or develop their idea(s),

agreeing with, confirming understanding of, or asking for confirmation of another member's idea, supplying a word or phrase to complete another member's idea or thought, asking a group member to repeat an idea, establishing or recognizing participants' roles or contributions, competing to get or maintain a turn or yielding a turn in the conversation, maintaining social relations within the group, and expressing feelings about working in the group, the group process or about another group member.

5. Adult ESL learners respond to each other's use of English in order to confirm or correct each other's pronunciation, use of vocabulary or idiomatic expressions, and grammar or syntax.

6. Collaborative group discussion facilitates critical thinking in adult ESL learners by allowing them individually and/or collaboratively to focus their responses from concrete details and information in the text to higher levels of response to literature.

Factors that Facilitate the Oral Responses of Adult ESL Learners

Current research and theory in response to literature have cited the critical interaction that the individual reader, the text, and the social context play in the construction of meaning of a literary text. Therefore, the factors that facilitate the oral

responses of adult ESL learners are presented as hypotheses under three main headings: text-based factors, reader-based factors and context-based factors.

Text-Based Factors

Based on the data collected in this study, it is hypothesized that the following textual features facilitate response:

- Challenging, unabridged texts, such as those employed in this study, that are still accessible in terms of their readability level, potential for eliciting personal connections and universal appeal;
- Texts that have symbolic elements that permit the reader to make connections between concrete details and abstract concepts and to externalize universal human conflicts, feelings, and basic patterns in human existence;
- Texts whose titles provide clues about the text's meaning(s);
- Texts whose characters have conflicts or problems with which students can in some way identify;
- Texts that create a sense of suspense or arouse readers' expectations as to what will happen next; and
- Texts that stimulate readers to think about what may happen to the characters after the story ends; and texts that raise issues and concerns relevant to students' own backgrounds and experiences.

Reader-Based Factors

The following behaviors that some of the readers exhibited at various points in this study are hypothesized to be factors that also facilitate understanding. These behavioral characteristics of readers include:

- Readers who accept that they do not fully understand a text and attempt to clarify their doubts and uncertainties;
- Readers who are not satisfied with a partial or limited understanding of a text and who in their quest to understand elicit more discussion from others;
- Readers who willingly consider a variety of perspectives and interpretations about a text;
- Readers who tolerate ambiguity in literary texts;
- Readers who speculate about various aspects of a text and marshal evidence to support and/or refute an interpretation;
- Readers who transact with texts as a virtual reality or experience while they willingly suspend their disbelief; and
- Readers who consider alternative perspectives while sustaining the authority of their own interpretations.

Context-Based Factors

With respect to the context in which texts are read and discussed, it is hypothesized that learners'

responses to a text are also facilitated when the context has the following characteristics:

- Affords learners the opportunity to generate and respond to their own questions and doubts about a text;
- Permits learners to utilize a variety of meaning-making strategies;
- Allows learners to explore their responses at their own pace and within a conversational context that flows naturally out of the learners' own concerns, preoccupations and interests with respect to a text and to each other;
- Provides an opportunity to explore a text in conjunction with other texts linked by similar characters, events or themes;
- Permits learners to establish, clarify or alter the task or topic based on the consensus of the group;
- Gives learners an opportunity to assume a variety of different roles within the same group; and
- Involves a task that provides enough structure, focus and freedom for the group to collaborate successfully both in the short and long term.

Discussion of Hypotheses

The discussion of the hypotheses generated by this study deals with seven principal areas. These areas are: (a) the kinds of topics adult ESL learners discuss

in collaborative group contexts; (b) the nature of the utterances of adult ESL learners in collaborative group contexts; (c) strategies for communicating opinions by adult ESL learners in collaborative groups; (d) strategies utilized by adult ESL learners in collaboratively constructing meaning of short stories in English; (e) ways in which adult learners may reach a consensus of interpretation about short stories in English; (f) ways in which teachers may establish meaningful communicative contexts in the ESL classroom; (g) the role of literature in second-language learning.

The Kinds of Topics Adult ESL Learners Discuss in Collaborative Group Contexts

This study found that adult ESL learners discuss a broad range of topics in a collaborative group context and that the focus of these topics may be categorized in six broad areas: talk related to the collaborative task, talk related to participants' behavior or roles, talk related to participants' use of English, attempts to confirm understanding of the text, attempts to speculate about or explore a particular aspect of the text, and attempts to extract a message or lesson from the text.

This study found that despite the broad range of topics discussed by adult ESL learners in the collaborative group sessions, there was no talk by the participants of the kind of evaluation Applebee (1978)

and Galda (1983) term analytic evaluation, which is primarily concerned with identifying how the text works as a structured whole. This type of evaluation seeks to explain how the text's structure or various textual elements may have contributed to the reader's response to the text. The data collected in this study showed little evidence of this kind of response; rather, the participants' attempts to express like or dislike about a particular element of the text or the text as a whole were ways by which the participants confirmed their understanding of a text. Oftentimes an initial expression of dislike of a text appeared related to a participant's difficulty in understanding that text. Once participants were able to clarify their understanding, the initial dislike of a text changed to a more favorable evaluation or opinion of the text.

The Nature of the Utterances of Adult ESL Learners in Collaborative Group Contexts

It was found that adult ESL learners' utterances in a collaborative group discussion could best be described as highly fluid, constantly shifting, and dynamic in nature. The group's collaborative process was inextricably bound to its meaning-making process. The focus of discussion would shift abruptly whenever a group member's concern changed from an aspect of making meaning to one of collaboration. That concern might

have to do with any one of a number of elements, including the collaborative task, participants' behavior or roles, and participants' uses of English. A shift in focus might also occur when a participant introduced or interjected a question or comment that caused the group to pursue a different aspect of the text or to consider the text in a different way.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the talk was its tentative nature. The participants often appeared uncertain of their understanding(s) and interpretations of a given text and attempted in various ways to confirm what they had understood with other group members. This uncertainty led to numerous instances in which participants summarized parts of the text, clarified specific details or information in the text, translated words, phrases or entire passages of a text, or recalled their feelings or understanding as they had read the text outside of class. In addition, both during and after talk that sought to confirm understanding of the text, there was a considerable amount of talk that involved speculating about or exploring a particular aspect of the text. This kind of speculative talk was usually very tentative in nature and could be characterized as having an air of certainty or authority only when the group had achieved a consensus on the issue, and even then there were

instances when an element of doubt appeared to remain.

Another key feature of the talk was its recursive nature. The group might focus briefly on a particular topic, leave it, return to it, leave it again, and return to it at a later point in the same session or even at a future session. This kind of recursiveness appeared to help the participants become more familiar or comfortable with their ideas and their understanding as these ideas acquired a kind of authority or legitimacy, having been stated in a tentative fashion, tested out, then supported, rejected or refined in various ways. The freedom to discuss individual and group concerns may have helped to promote the recursive nature of the talk.

Strategies for Communicating Opinions by Adult ESL Learners in Collaborative Groups

The participants of this study, all native speakers of Spanish, used a variety of strategies to communicate their ideas and opinions within the collaborative group context. It was found that the participants not only were able to maintain most of the conversation of each session in English but that they appeared to make an effort to do so; at times when a group member was struggling to communicate an idea in English, another would tell him or her to express the thought in Spanish. In many instances, the person would insist on trying to

complete the thought in English despite the obvious difficulty. On other occasions, the person might switch to Spanish yet would still exhibit difficulty in expressing the idea in his or her first language.

In addition, the participants employed a variety of ways to regulate their own behavior and roles within the group that also promoted communication. Utterances that served to bring group members back to task, to maintain social relations within the group, to express feelings about working in the group, the group process or about another group member, and to establish or recognize participants' roles or contributions, were apparent in all the discussion sessions. Such utterances helped the group to cohere and function collaboratively throughout the semester. Other types of talk, such as encouraging or inviting members to participate or develop an idea, agreeing with, confirming understanding of or asking for confirmation of another member's idea, supplying a word or phrase to complete another member's idea or thought, asking a group member to repeat an idea, or competing to get or maintain a turn or yielding a turn in the conversation, consistently helped the participants to generate, refine and develop their ideas. All group members, some clearly more than others, engaged in this type of talk which allowed the conversation to flow from one topic to another.

Another feature of the participants' talk was how they attempted to confirm or correct each other's pronunciation, vocabulary usage, or grammar whenever these elements interfered with an individual's understanding of another's idea or when a group member simply felt the need to do so. It was clear that the group's general focus was on understanding each other's ideas and not on the form or correctness of those ideas. Group members more often than not chose not to correct other members' incorrect grammatical usage rather than interfere with or disrupt the flow of ideas. Furthermore, a person's use of English was more likely to be corrected if that person was speaking slowly or haltingly.

Strategies Utilized by Adult ESL Learners in Collaboratively Constructing Meaning of Short Stories in English

This study found that adult ESL learners utilize many different strategies to construct meanings of short stories in English. Among the most prevalent of these strategies were attempts to summarize parts of the text, to clarify specific details or information in the text, to translate words, phrases or passages in the text to Spanish, to connect the text to personal experience or to another text, to recall feelings or understanding while reading the text, and to express like or dislike

about a particular element of the text or the text as a whole. This latter element, which in previous studies (Applebee, 1978; Galda, 1983) has been classified as an expression of personal involvement or engagement with the text, was categorized in this study as talk related to confirming understanding of the text. This investigator observed a connection between the participants' like or dislike of a text and the extent to which they understood that text. A participant who claimed to like a text also appeared to be indicating that he or she had understood the text. By contrast, statements of dislike of a text generally involved a text that was not well understood.

Once participants more fully confirmed their understanding of a story or clarified their doubts and resolved those points of confusion, expressions of dislike would change to ones of enjoyment and interest. Reading aloud from the text was another common strategy used by the participants in this study. Reading aloud appeared to serve three main functions: to identify phrases or passages that were unclear; to identify passages that could be used to support or refute a particular understanding or interpretation; and/or to call attention to a passage that was thought to be particularly interesting. In texts that contained particularly troublesome passages for the group, such as

"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" or a concluding section in "Eveline," reading aloud would lead the group to confirm its understanding by translating the passage to Spanish. On other occasions, reading aloud of certain passages would result in attempts to explain the passage in the participants' own words in order to confirm understanding.

Another less prevalent strategy was the participants' use of a dictionary, usually an all-English dictionary, to understand specific words. A participant read aloud some of the definitions listed, and the group used the context of the story in which the word was used to identify the appropriate meaning of a word. On a few occasions, the group called the classroom teacher over to explain a phrase not found in a dictionary. The group then attempted to fit the teacher's explanation to the context of the story to make sure that the explanation given was appropriate.

The participants' use of speculation about a particular aspect of the text was another important strategy participants used to construct meaning(s) of the text. Speculation was generally talk that could best be characterized as tentative or uncertain. It often led to attempts to support or reject an interpretation or hypothesis, and sometimes resulted in exploration of some other element of the text, such as

the motives for another character's behavior, the author's purpose or intention, what might happen after the story ended, or to an issue the participants found compelling or interesting.

Another strategy the participants employed to gain an understanding of the text as a whole was to attempt to extract a message or lesson from the text. The participants identified a general message or messages for all the stories used in the study with the exception of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." They appeared to believe that identifying an overarching message or lesson was important to do, and the group would generally engage in this strategy somewhere between the middle and end of a given discussion session. However, a discussion session never began with an attempt either to extract a specific message or lesson from a text or to identify an author's possible intention or purpose in writing a particular story. It appeared to this investigator that the participants needed considerable time to confirm and rehearse their understanding(s), to gain support for their initially tentative interpretations by testing them out in a public forum, and to develop or refine their understanding before they attempted to formulate a higher level generalization or interpretation.

Ways in which Adult ESL Learners May Reach a Consensus of Interpretation about Short Stories in English

This study found that adult ESL learners may reach a consensus of interpretation about short stories in English when certain conditions are present: a community of learners in which mutual trust and respect are established or allowed to develop early in the collaborative process so that individual and group attempts to understand a text are taken seriously, interpretations are put forward, supported, rejected, or reformulated as necessary, and opinions are valued and even sought out.

In addition, the community or group appears to benefit when there is at least one person who assumes a leadership position within the group and leads the group through multiple interpretive responses. Although the presence of a leader is important, no one individual will dominate the group as long as other group members interchangeably take on different roles while interacting with the same or different texts.

Ways in which Teachers May Establish Meaningful Communicative Contexts in the ESL Classroom

This study suggests that there are specific ways by which teachers can establish meaningful communicative contexts in the ESL classroom. These include:

1. Offer theme-based curricula that permit learners to

look at a topic or issue from a variety of perspectives, while at the same time they explore it in depth;

2. Give learners clearly focused tasks that permit genuine collaboration to occur;

3. Establish classroom contexts that provide a balance between structure and freedom, between clear expectations and goals and diverse ways for learners to achieve them;

4. Create classroom environments that promote the use of all language skills in an integrated fashion so that adult ESL learners can utilize language in a natural communicative context as a way to accomplish specific purposes, goals, and tasks.

The Role of Short Stories in Second-Language Learning

This investigator found that short stories read and discussed in a collaborative context offer a kind of reading experience that enables adult ESL learners to sharpen and extend their comprehension and oral skills because stories provide authentic language as well as credible human experiences by virtue of characters, events, conflicts and universal issues that stimulate discussion and interest. Challenging short stories, through their metaphorical and symbolic language, foster higher levels of critical thinking. Furthermore, short stories promote multiple responses and perspectives as readers find themselves interacting with literature's

many levels of meaning and ambiguity. This type of interaction can lead to active discussion and the acquisition of new vocabulary, concepts, insights, and knowledge within a meaningful communicative context.

Recommendations for Teaching

Based on the data and hypotheses of this study, this investigator makes the following recommendations for teaching English as a second language.

1. Greater use of challenging unabridged short stories and other types of fiction should be made. Such texts are a useful vehicle for fostering meaningful communicative contexts in the classroom, for improving comprehension skills, facilitating higher level critical thinking skills, and for promoting an interest in reading and literature.

2. Development and use of specific collaborative tasks that promote the use and acquisition of English within a meaningful communicative context should also be undertaken. Collaborative learning contexts offer an environment in which adult ESL learners can practice the second language, share opinions and perspectives, confirm understanding, clarify doubts and uncertainties, speculate on the possible meaning(s) of texts, utilize a variety of strategies to learn, take responsibility for their own learning, have the freedom to address their own questions, concerns and interests, assume a variety

of roles within a group, meet the needs of individual learners and learn to make decisions and achieve consensus.

3. Activities where the underlying philosophy balances structure and freedom in order to allow meaningful learning to occur should also be used. Classrooms that permit adult ESL learners to utilize all language skills naturally as a means of accomplishing specific tasks and purposes, that allow adult learners to gain ownership of those tasks, and hence of their own learning, and that encourage learners to share the process and the outcomes of their learning with each other appear to provide an effective environment for learning.

Implications for Research

This study raises issues and questions for other related areas of study and research. Among the possible areas of future investigation are the following:

1. The nature of difficult texts needs to be explored in more detail. What are the features of such texts? At what point does a text's difficulty make it inaccessible to ESL readers as opposed to simply challenging? In what ways do more difficult texts promote and enhance specific areas of second- language acquisition?

2. More case studies of individual adult ESL readers reading need to be undertaken. How similar to and/or different are adult ESL readers from their native

language counterparts?

3. More case studies of collaborative groups should be conducted in order to formulate a more complete theory of successful collaborative learning.

4. The connection between collaborative group discussion of literary texts and written responses to such texts needs to be explored.

5. Studies that utilize other types of texts, such as poems, non-fictional literary texts, e.g., literary essays, or non-literary texts, such as magazine and newspaper articles, should also be conducted.

6. The types of settings in which adult ESL learners collaboratively discuss their responses to literature should be examined. How do these settings contribute to theories of reading, writing and second-language learning and acquisition?

7. The essential elements or characteristics of a learner-centered classroom in which the teacher is primarily a facilitator are in need of further investigation. What differences, if any, are there between this type of environment when used with adult native speakers of English as opposed to adult ESL learners?

8. Participation in learner-centered classroom environments such as the one described in this study should be further studied. How does participation in

learner-centered classrooms affect the perspectives and perceptions of teachers, learners, and researchers?

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APPENDIX A

SYNOPSES OF THE SHORT STORIES

Synopses of the Short Stories

Male-Female Relationships

"A Domestic Dilemma" by Carson McCullers is about a family that has moved from the South to a New York City suburb. The husband commutes to his office job in the city and his wife takes care of their two young children. Martin begins to notice that Marianne has begun to drink excessively and he is concerned that the children are not being well cared for. However, he doesn't want anyone to know of the problem. Toward the end of the story he feels that "he and his children were bound to a future of degradation and slow ruin," and he contemplates leaving her. The story ends with these ambiguous lines: "By moonlight he watched his wife for the last time. His hands sought the adjacent flesh and sorrow paralleled desire in the immense complexity of love."

"Warm River" by Erskine Caldwell is narrated by a young man named Richard who is making a trip to the mountains to visit a girl named Gretchen. He arrives at nightfall and has to cross a footbridge over a river below. During the evening Richard hears Gretchen's father speak of his deceased wife with great feeling and tenderness and of the power of the river below, which is always warm, "even in winter." Richard knows that Gretchen loves him but is unsure of his own feelings toward her. He has only come to share Gretchen's bed for one night and then leave the next day. Gretchen is aware of his intentions but is prepared to give herself to him anyway. During the night he goes to Gretchen's bedroom and sees her kneeling at the side of her bed, praying, tears falling down her face. Richard returns to his bedroom without making his presence known. The following morning he asks Gretchen to take him down to the river so he can "feel the water" with his own hands.

"Long Walk to Forever" by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is the story of two young people, Newt and Catherine, who "had grown up next door to each other," "within sight of a lovely bell tower that belonged to a school for the blind." While they had always had a warm and playful relationship, there had never been any talk of love. Newt had been in the Army for a year when he receives a letter from his mother informing him that Catherine is about to get married. He leaves the Army without

permission, hitchhikes home, and goes directly to Catherine's house. A shy person, Newt invites Catherine to go for a walk with him, using the phrase "one foot in front of the other--through leaves, over bridges," a phrase he repeats several times during their walk through the woods. During the walk Newt tells Catherine he loves her, but she tells him it's too late. At the end of the story they part company and as she walks away he calls out to her; she runs to him, puts her arms around him, and cannot speak.

Imagination and Fantasy

"The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber is the tale of an ordinary middle aged man who secretly imagines himself in the most extraordinary of situations: as a Navy pilot taking his plane and crew through a hurricane; a great surgeon about to operate on a millionaire banker; a witness in a court trial who also happens to be a world-class marksman and who, to save a beautiful woman accused of murder, admits that he could have committed the crime; a Captain in the Army about to fly a bomber by himself to attack the enemy's ammunition dump and in the process save his comrades from certain death. In each scene, something in Mitty's environment triggers his fantasy in which he is always the center of all attention, the hero. At the story's end he imagines himself a prisoner of war about to be executed by an enemy fire squad, "erect and motionless, proud and disdainful," "undefeated, inscrutable to the last."

"The Kugelmass Episode" by Woody Allen relates the story of Sidney Kugelmass, a Professor of humanities at City College, who feels trapped by his marriage and his life. He yearns for adventure and romance, but his therapist, frustrated by Kugelmass' unwillingness to face his problems realistically, tells him, "I am an analyst, not a magician." A couple of weeks later Kugelmass receives quite unexpectedly a phone call from someone who identifies himself as "The Great Persky" and who offers Kugelmass the solution to his problems. Persky has a magic cabinet with the power to transport a person into any book where the person becomes a character in that book. Kugelmass is sent into Flaubert's Madame Bovary where he has an affair with the beautiful but doomed Emma Bovary. Later, at Kugelmass' request, Persky brings Emma out of the book to New York City where she causes Kugelmass more problems than she

is worth. Kugelmass has Persky return Emma to her book, promising never to cheat again. Three weeks later, a sheepish Kugelmass returns asking to be sent to another book that promises more sex. This time, however, things go terribly awry: the cabinet explodes, Persky dies of a heart attack, the house burns down, and Kugelmass finds himself "projected into an old textbook, Remedial Spanish, and was running for his life over a barren, rocky terrain as the word tener ("to have")--a large and hairy irregular verb--raced after him on its spindly legs."

"The Pomegranate Trees" by William Saroyan begins with the lines: "My uncle Melik was just about the worst farmer that ever lived. He was too imaginative and poetic for his own good. What he wanted was beauty. My uncle just liked the idea of planting trees and watching them grow." The narrator proceeds to tell the story of how his Armenian-born uncle attempted to transform the 680-acre desert land he had bought into a garden. When his uncle finally succeeded in growing his pomegranate trees, he could find no one who would buy his pomegranates at what he considered a fair price. Rather than sell his fruit for less money, Uncle Melik had his boxes of pomegranates shipped back to him, whereupon he and his nephew ate most of them themselves. Unable to make any more payments on the land, Uncle Melik is forced to sell it back to the original owner. Three years later the narrator and his uncle return to the land and see that all the pomegranate trees have died. They drive back to town but "didn't say anything because there was such an awful lot to say, and no language to say it in."

Journeys and Discoveries

"War" by Luigi Pirandello is about a group of parents who are traveling by train to go see their sons who are fighting at the front of an unnamed war. They find themselves in the same compartment and begin a conversation. Each character is never named but only identified by a physical description. The parents begin to argue about who among them is suffering the most. A fat man suddenly interrupts and chastises them for their selfish attitudes. He proudly tells them that his son chose to serve his country and that his son, before dying, sent him "a message saying that he was dying satisfied at having ended his life in the best way he could have wished." A woman who had been lamenting the

fact that her own son was in the war begins to feel that she too should handle the situation with the same dignity and stoicism that the fat traveler had exhibited. The woman asks him, "Then ... is your son really dead?" "He looked and looked at her, almost as if only then--at that silly, incongruous question--he realized at last that his son was really dead--gone for ever--for ever." At that moment, "to the amazement of everyone," he "broke into harrowing, heart-rending, uncontrollable sobs."

"Eveline" by James Joyce opens with the main character, Eveline, sitting at the window looking out at the neighborhood in which she grew up. Now 19, she observes how certain things have changed and how some people, including her two older brothers, have moved away. Eveline also has the opportunity to leave home, where she has the responsibility to take care of everything, including two younger sisters and an aging father, who has never shown her love or affection and whose menacing presence she fears as her deceased mother once did. Her hope for a new life is Frank, a merchant marine, a "very kind, manly, open-hearted" man who has asked her to go away with him to Buenos Aires and whom she must see in secret because of her disapproving father. Eveline is terribly conflicted by her decision of whether to leave with her boy friend and face an unknown future in an unfamiliar place or to stay at home and keep the family together as she had promised her dying mother. The day when Eveline is to leave with Frank comes. He is on the boat waiting for her to join him. As she nears the ship, she freezes. As he calls to her, Eveline "set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition."

"The Sojourner" by Carson McCullers is the story of John Ferris, an American journalist who has spent the last years in various European countries. He wakes up in a New York hotel room, having just come from his father's funeral. "The shock of death had made him aware of youth already passed." That morning he sees Elizabeth, his ex-wife whom has not seen for eight years, walking in the street. He follows her but decides not to overtake her. Later in the day he impulsively telephones her and she invites him over for dinner even though she and her second husband have theater tickets that evening. Ferris observes how beautiful she still is. It is evident to him that she

has managed to rebuild her life after their divorce. She has two lovely children and a trusting husband who lets them talk alone. Ferris tells her that he is about to marry his girl friend in Paris and that he and her son have a close relationship, none of which is true. Upon his return to Paris, "Ferris glimpsed the disorder of his life: the succession of cities, of transitory loves; and time, the sinister glissando of the years, time always." Back in his apartment he tells his girl friend's son they will do things together and "never be in a hurry anymore." Then, "with inner desperation he pressed the child close--as though an emotion as protean as his love could dominate the pulse of time."

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS USED BY STUDENTS TO EVALUATE EACH OTHER'S GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Questions Used by Students to Evaluate Each Other's Group Presentations

1. How well did the group demonstrate its understanding of the stories?
2. How well did the group support its interpretations of the stories?
3. How well did all group members participate in the presentation?
4. How well did the group respond to the audience's questions?
5. How interesting and well organized was the group's presentation?
6. What is your overall impression of the presentation?

ABSTRACT

THE RESPONSES OF ADULT ESL LEARNERS TO SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH IN COLLABORATIVE SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Lewis Levine, PhD

Fordham University, New York, 1998

Mentor: Rita S. Brause, EdD

The purpose of this hypothesis-generating study was to analyze the responses of four adult students to nine short stories in English in collaborative small-group discussions over a one-semester period as part of an intermediate-level ESL course in an urban bilingual community college. The participants were all native speakers of Spanish.

The researcher developed a model of the students' meaning-making and collaborative processes that included six principal categories: confirming understanding; speculating; extracting a message; participant roles; collaborative task; and use of English. The participants' talk was found to shift from topic to topic and to be highly speculative and recursive in nature. A broad range of participant roles helped students to build their responses to the texts and to regulate their own behavior in a collaborative fashion.

An in-depth analysis of the participants' responses to two types of texts revealed that the participants made significantly more meaning-confirming utterances

with a more difficult text and speculated more about various elements of the more easily understood text. The participants also focused less on the accuracy of their use of English when discussing more difficult text.

The researcher generated the following hypotheses: (a) Adult ESL learners initially focus their oral responses on confirming their understanding of a text using a variety of strategies; (b) Adult ESL learners speculate on a broad range of textual elements and attempt to extract a message or lesson once they believe they have understood the text; (c) Challenging, unabridged symbolic texts that have identifiable conflicts, that arouse readers' expectations about what will happen next, and that raise issues and concerns relevant to students' experiences, facilitate students' responses; (d) More effective readers attempt to clarify their doubts, tolerate ambiguity, marshal evidence to support or refute interpretations, transact with a text as a virtual experience, and consider alternative perspectives; and (e) Learning environments that allow students to generate and respond to their own questions, to explore their responses at their own pace, to assume a variety of roles, and provide sufficient structure and freedom, promote successful collaboration.

VITA

VITA

LEWIS LEVINE

Date of Birth	August 17, 1950
Place of Birth	Bronx, New York
High School	George School Newtown, Pennsylvania Graduated May 1968
Bachelor of Arts General Studies	Harvard College Cambridge, Massachusetts Conferred June 1974
Master of Arts in Curriculum and Teaching	Teachers College, Columbia University New York, New York Conferred October 1976
Doctor of Philosophy	Fordham University New York, New York Conferred February 1999
Academic Position	Lecturer, English Hostos Community College, CUNY, Bronx, New York 1980-Present
Current Position	Coordinator, ESL Intensive Program Hostos Community College, CUNY, Bronx, New York 1989-Present

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